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ALTHA ;

OR,

SHELLS FROM THE STRAND.

BY

MRS. ADA M. FIELD.

"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding."—JOB, xxxii : 8.

BOSTON:
JAMES FRENCH AND COMPANY.
1856.

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TO THE
ESTEEMED FRIENDS
AND
RESPECTED CITIZENS,
WHO GENEROUSLY ENCOURAGED ME
TO PUBLISH THE MANUSCRIPT
THIS BOOK IS
GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

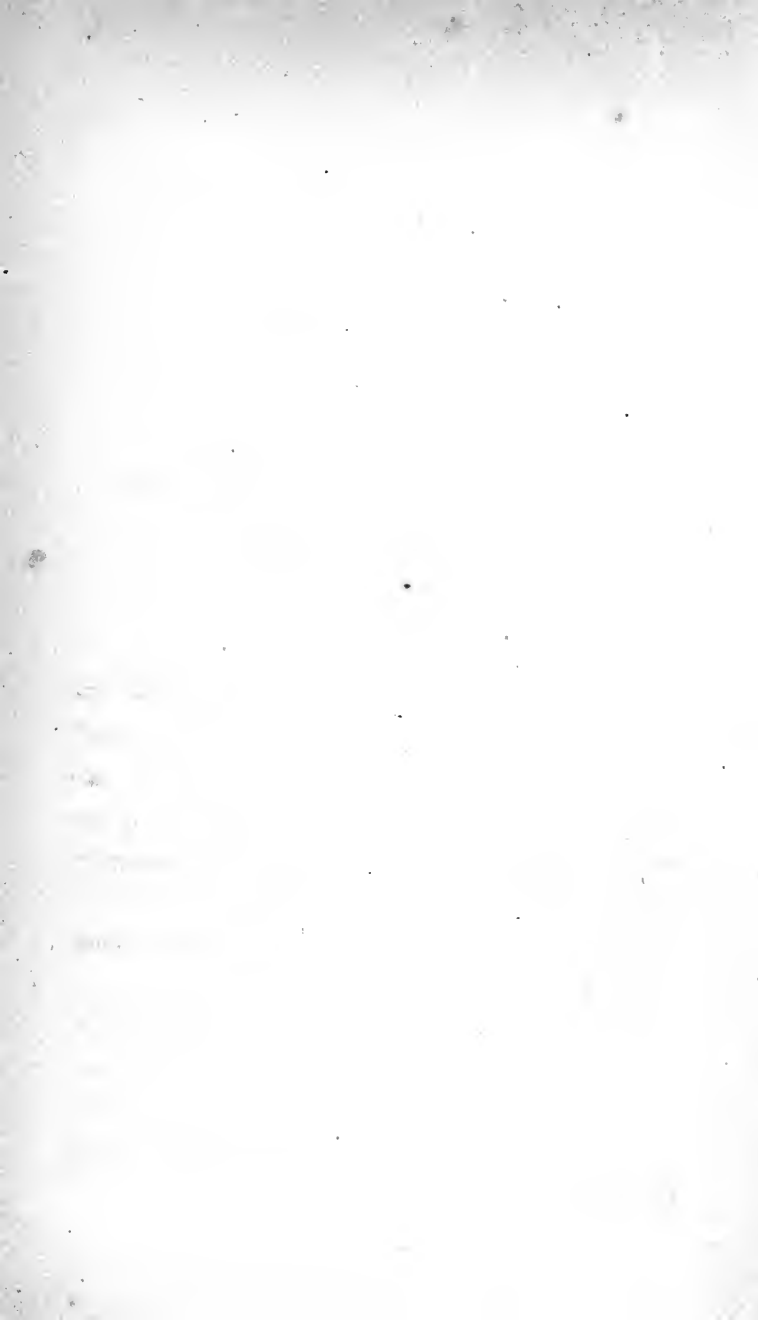
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INTRODUCTION.

WHY have I ventured to launch my frail bark among so many noble-freighted and gallant vessels, upon the ever-changing sea of public opinion? I answer — that I may place before you its simple freight of shells — an offering of love, hope and duty; — love for the noble hearts, unchanged by Time's stern teachings; hope that it may strengthen some faint heart yearning for the good, yet lingering by the way-side; and duty, that whispers in spirit-voices, on, on, ever on, toward the right, where shines the Eastern Star, emblem of God's light and love!

I have gleaned them, journeying in storm and sunshine, — pictures of home life; they were mine; they are yours.



A L T H A ;

OR,

SHELLS FROM THE STRAND.

CHAPTER I.

“ A glorious day. And the good people of this Tri-mountain City seem fully to appreciate its charms,” soliloquized Halvor Hazel, while standing within the doorway of the American House, glancing along the *pave* at the throng of pedestrians constantly passing in every direction.

“ Many a countenance seems familiar, yet I cannot claim acquaintance with any.”

“ Truly a stranger in a great city, is in the midst of solitude, and feels what it is to be alone. It seems but a short time since I left my home to try my fortune in distant lands, yet I find many changes, even in this great city.”

“Life’s scenes are change, changing ever. Ah well! I will take a stroll hoping to find as much as a shadow of some old friend remaining.”

And he proceeded along the street with the easy care-for-nothing air of the perfect man of leisure. He quickened his steps as he reached Court Street, occasionally glancing at the numerous signs he passed, until his attention was arrested by a long list of names, posted beside a shady entrance, the ponderous door of which stood invitingly open. He commenced ascending several flight of stairs, musing as he went.

“What a cavernous looking entrance, how mysteriously dark. I wonder how many tortured, anguished heads and hearts have passed up and down these gloomy steps.”

He reached a half glass door, standing slightly ajar, on which was portrayed in large black letters, Ethan Eldridge, Attorney and Counsellor at Law, and quietly entered without ceremony.

The occupant of the room was leaning back in his chair, his arms suspended by a thumb caught in each arm-hole of his vest, his well shaped limbs crossed, and resting on the top of an opposite chair, in which comfortable position he seemed wholly lost in reverie profound,

or given up to the study of some perspective speculation. So intent were his thoughts upon his subject, that his visitor stood several seconds coolly surveying the interior of the apartment. Seeing the gentleman little likely to be disturbed by his presence, he walked boldly forward, exclaiming,

“Ha! ha! ’Squire, turned visionary, and dreaming by sunlight?”

Instantly the person addressed was upon his feet, regarding the new comer whom he quickly grasped, and shook cordially by the hand.

“‘Shade of the Styx!’ ‘My dear fellow, where did you come from? Ah! my boy,’” laying his hand affectionately on his shoulder, “were you thinking of the possibility of ‘Charon’ bringing back to this shore of mortality, some restless spirit of a former client, that you seem so surprised at seeing me?”

“Oh no, by no means, have no fear upon that score; but I’m delighted to see you. Welcome, thrice welcome home, my dear friend. When did you arrive? Put up at the Tremont, of course, and are going to stop with us now, are you not?”

With a bland smile at the squire’s habit of premising one’s thoughts and actions. Halvor quietly answered.

"I arrived in town late last evening, stopped at the American, (by the way, a new house opened since I left,) which I have heard spoken of as being good at furnishing home comforts, and quiet; and intend to stop just long enough to get a little refreshed."

"But Ethan it is more than five years since we parted company, leaving you to enjoy golden dreams, along with the heterogeneous mass of humanity congregated in the famous city of San Francisco, ostensibly poring over grim statute books in the law office of Judge L——. Perhaps, occasionally, planning a siege against the heart of some fair *Senorita* with golden pile and broad *rancheros* in possession. Why is it I find you with all your former ideal glory departed, settled down in this changeful climate a Benedict."

"O ask me not, I know nothing."

And his eye-lids drooped meekly. Yet a close observer might see the smiling light of that hazel orb as it turned a glance back upon the inner cell, where was hidden the precious secret.

"Ethan this is hardly fair, I'll have to cut your acquaintance on account of this unwarrantable selfish

silence, or in future repay you the same coin with interest."

"Do no such thing Hal, and I'll confess."

"The truth is, I'm more anxious to hear of your adventures, than to tell mine; and why should I not be? You have traveled throughout the length and breadth of this, our glorious land, even to the western portal, whose stupendous arches could shelter a stranded nation, while proudly flung wide to welcome the commerce of the globe."

"But here comes a client," said lawyer Eldridge, taking out his watch as a foot-fall sounded on the stairs. "I will dispose of his business as soon as possible, make yourself comfortable, here is the morning paper."

"Thank you, don't hurry on my account. While you are engaged, I will drop into the Exchange, and take a look at the Washington Street belles, many of their former images are retained in the little niche where memory hides the pencilings of the beautiful."

"Exactly; but you must dine with me to-day. We dine at three; not the most fashionable hour perhaps, but it suits my time best."

"You may depend upon me, I would not willingly

lose this opportunity of paying my respects to your wife."

Once more shaking hands at parting, Mr. Hazel made his exit as the stranger entered, and touching his hat *au revoir* disappeared from the landing.

CHAPTER II.

“ I go, I go! And must mine image fade
From the green spots, wherein my childhood play’d,
By my own streams?
Must my life part from each familiar place,
As a bird’s song, that leaves the woods no trace
Of its lone themes?”

MRS. HEMANS.

IN journeying through life, we meet many pleasant acquaintances, and hold agreeable “chat and chaffer” with them, knowing them only by name, perchance, not even that.

However, we will improve the present opportunity to learn something more concerning our new acquaintances while they are engaged.

Mr. Hazel, or Halvor as he used to be familiarly called, owned the modern city of Athens as his birth place. His father, a wealthy and talented gentleman, doted upon Halvor, his only son, and spared neither teachers nor expense to educate him a perfect gentleman. But Halvor would grow wild and careless, and the father

saw with dismay, that his son was frequently meeting with fast young men about town, and feared and trembled for his darling.

One day Halvor received from his hitherto too indulgent parent a severe reprimand. In anger he seized his hat, rushed into the hall, and out into the street; no kind, relenting voice as usual recalled him. Therefore, sullenly he kept on his way, aimless his purpose, as had been his life. He walked for a time beside the Park, then entered it, and sauntered along the mall; vexed still, he threw himself upon one of the stone benches, beneath the shade of the wide spreading trees, and gave way to dark, bitter thoughts. The day was beautiful, the cool sea breeze, from off the dark blue waters, fanned his flushed and angry brow, and played with the heavy mass of raven hair that shaded his broad lofty forehead. His eye flashed, then softened as he gazed towards his home, seen in the distance. He could see his sister's room, and raising his tall form bent forward inquiringly, as through the open casement the white lace window drapery rose and fell with the light breeze, hoping and wishing to see her own dear self watching beside it. Anon he watched the tiny boat of the

juveniles, wafted over the mimic waves of the pond, to them a *petite* ocean, which reminded him of his own boyish sports. He turned again toward the paternal mansion, now doubly dear because he had left it in anger. The shutters of his mothers room were closed as usual. Sad, sad indeed were his thoughts reminding him of that dear lost one, who had loved him, and watched over his early days, with all gentleness; curbing the impetuous temper, and bending the strong will that would break forth with harsh words and stern commands from less sympathizing persons.

He bent low his head, upon his hands, and gave way to the flood-tide of feeling, which served to cool his anger. At that moment two girls brushed gaily past him, dressed in gauze and pastry gems, chattering and giggling as they walked. He raised his head. His lip curled. The feeling of vexation was but momentary.

“Oh why should I be angry with you, trifling dolls; for thus disturbing my reverie. Take comfort while you may; perhaps you are the wisest of the two. However, your flight has recalled me to myself. A few moments longer with this soothing, familiar scene around me; and thy potent influence my sainted

mother, and I had succumbed to the ideal Goddess, and had crept back to my father's Hall softened and subdued. I would ask to be forgiven, but in this case he is in the wrong, and I will not be mean spirited through any fear of the future."

He drew himself up and gazed proudly, sadly around him.

"Farewell stately elms, and staid gravel walks, beauteous green-sward and sparkling fountains, I leave your cherished images for other scenes whose darker hues shall nerve the soul to dare and do."

He hastened resolutely forward through thronging thoroughfares, courts and narrow streets, a weary round, stopping mechanically, it would seem, upon the wharf and commenced surveying the packets and steamers anchored in the dock and harbor. His brow grew darker. His lips compressed more firmly. Not even the sonorous "heave ahoy" of the sailors, which he had formerly loved so well, had power to stir the current of his thoughts. A hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he turned suddenly, almost fiercely toward the intruder, confronting our friend Ethan whose cheerful tones aroused him.

"Ah! Halvor this is fortunate indeed, our meeting here."

"Any thing remarkable in it;" rejoined Halvor rather coldly, not feeling in the mood for company.

"Only this; I am off for the gold regions, and could not otherwise have seen you before leaving."

"Possible! had not heard such was your intention."

"Suppose not, for I tried to keep shady about it, I could not endure to talk over and discuss the subject with every one. I don't like these adieus, unless with a discharged creditor, bad case, or something of that sort."

"When do you leave?"

"I start to-morrow morning."

"So soon!"

"Yes; I went to the city of Gotham two weeks ago to purchase my ticket."

"Ethan just book me for your famous El Dorado."

"Halvor I should be most happy to do so; but, can you be in earnest?"

"Yes; there is nothing to prevent my keeping you company."

Except you have no need to go; you have not to wait your turn, complaining clients scarce, office don't pay."

"Well, never mind that now, but remember the old adage 'variety is the spice of life.'"

"How long do you stop in York city? long enough to have me get together what I need."

"Yes, and we have a little time now; I am nearly through with my arrangements, I'll assist you, and gladly share with you all I have, only promise to stand by me when we get there."

Arm in arm the two friends hurried about for a couple of hours, then entering a saloon, Halvor wrote a hasty note, enclosing the key of his desk, and despatched a boy with it to No. —, Tremont street. Then calling for some refreshment the two sat down to await the return of the messenger. The note ran thus:

"SISTER ANNETTE:—

Send me a roll of bills you will find in my desk, and keep the key yourself until I return, I am going to New York, shall be absent a few days, in the mean time, love as ever,

Your brother

HALVOR."

"What! not going home Hal?"

"Don't mention it, I'd not like to enter into any explanation of my movements at this time."

Soon after, the two friends separated to meet at the rail-road station next morning.

“Well,” said Halvor, to himself, “taking a retrospective glance of this day’s transactions, we have made quick work of it.” “Alas, I have broken the last link that bound me to home and friends.”

He leaned forward and took up the evening paper, occasionally running his fingers through his hair that he might forget.

CHAPTER III.

"Art thou come with the heart of thy childhood back,
The free, the pure, the kind?
So murmur'd the trees in my homeward track,
As they played to the mountain wind."

MRS. HEMANS

FIVE years, old time with his hour-glass and scythe, has wandered as usual through our beautiful land, and now, Halvor, the wanderer, has returned. He has grown sterner and darker somewhat; he walks forth free and unconcernedly, yet at times, there is a sad expression flitting around the mouth and the eyelids which tell his thoughts are far away; had we met him in some distant country, we should have judged his heart was with his kindred. Yet how has he been engaged these weary years? Ah! Lawyer Eldridge's client has departed, and while the two gentlemen are going home, we will make ourselves acquainted with a page or two of the 'Squire's early history. He was a true scion of the north. In early days, inured to various hardships,

thought comparatively little of at the time, scarcely knowing them to be hardships, from the difference of contrast, I will repeat his story as I heard him relate it many years ago.

“When I was a little shaver, we lived upon the shore of Lake Winnepiseogee. One real hard winter, when father had been sick for many months, and mother had spent nearly all her funds for doctor’s stuff, I had to get up all the firewood, standing in the snow barefooted. Fortunately, fuel was plenty, and I did not have to go far to fetch it home. It was a long distance to the store where we could obtain shoes and stockings, besides, we did not know what might happen before winter was gone, how long father might be ill, therefore I would not take anything from mother’s fast diminishing pile, knowing she could not afford me any, so mended and mended the old ones, till they couldn’t hang on any longer, then concluded to go without.

“Alas! when the pleasant spring-time came, my father slept his last sleep, and sadly we laid him down to rest in the distant church-yard, and soon prepared to break up our home.

“Often in boyhood’s days, I have wandered along

the margin of that beautiful lake, where stood our cottage, building air castles, as I gazed upon the darkling blue limpid waters, whose glassy surface, reflected each tiny isle, each wooded hill and shady dell, with the grand old forest in the distance, and mountain tops lofty and grim, whose granite barriers would seem to defy even the assaults of time.

“Those were days before the giant steam-horse had crossed the country to our very borders, or the ‘Lady of the Lake’ had walked the silent waters, waking the echos of the fast nearing or receding shore with her shrill whistle, and the panting, puffing, snorting efforts of her sooty engine. But, as I was saying, we broke up housekeeping, and sold the farm to the highest bidder. Mother went to a distant part of the country, to reside with connexions of some pretensions to wealth and fashion, where she soon married again, thus entirely weaning me from home except by association of early days.

“Too proud to be dependant, boy as I was, I struck out for myself. Visiting the pretty village of Meridith, I found a good situation, with plenty of employment, also an opportunity for attending school, which I joy-

fully improved, and graduated at the academy in due time.

“Soon after, with hands in my pockets, and heart in the right place, I started upon a trip over the *hills* far to the north, where I met and made friends with the talented old Lawyer Underhill, a very worthy and respected citizen, who had a good run of practice in one of the inland, would-be cities, and studied law with his assistance, in his office three years.

“However, a peregrinating spirit was constantly getting the better of sober reason and staid habit; consequently, at the end of that time I packed up and came to this far-famed ‘city of notions.’”

CHAPTER IV.

"He who loves not his country can love nothing."

BYRON.

THE hour-hand on the dial-plate of the Old South pointed to three, as 'Squire Eldridge applied the latch-key, and ushered his friend into the hall. In the reception-room, which was most elegantly furnished, the fair Mrs. Eldridge was waiting for the master of ceremonies. The usual ones, of presentation and compliment, being over, they repaired to the dining hall.

Halvor supposed his coming had been entirely unexpected to his fair hostess, but found everything arranged for his comfort. His friend soon enlightened him, by remarking, "Halvor, I am trying to adopt that old fashion or whim of my father's that we have before spoken of, of laying an extra cover when no guest is expected. In this case, it has brought both the guest and the blessing, which I consider your coming to-day."

Animated and happy, they laughed and chatted, dis-

cussing the variety of good things. An hour and a half passed before the cloth was removed ; but as they were neither great epicures nor gourmands, such a hasty dinner might be excused, perhaps, even in fashionable circles.

Emilie T—— had been quite a belle : as Mrs. Eldridge, she was an interesting and agreeable lady, presiding with care and dignity over her household, with all the magnified honors, cares and pleasures usually pertaining to the establishment of a young wife.

Dinner being over, the gentlemen arose to leave on plea of previous engagements — that important “*somebody*” to meet — which must excuse them for leaving such pleasant cozy-like parlors.

“Have you forgotten our cards for Judge Merrill’s to-night?” Mrs. E—— ventured to say, addressing her husband, who stood before the mirror, pulling up his dickey, and giving his head a peculiar twist to see if his neckerchief was easy, then adjusting his hat, and surveying it with a look, as much as to say, don’t you think I’m pretty good looking?

“Now you remind me of it, I do remember. Well, tell John to have the carriage ready, and you go as

early as you like, I will come as soon as I can get away." And with a smile and "good bye," our friends are once more in the street.

"Now, Halvor, what shall I do to amuse you? we have some hours on hand; I have sent home my office-boy, and closed doors for to-day.

"Will you go to the opera? A friend sent me tickets."

"I am not in the mood for harmonious sounds to-night of that description."

"What then, shall we go to the lodge?"

"Where shall it be, Ethan? — where lofty halls are magnificently draped with damask silks and velvets, the gas jets flashing among cut-glass chandeliers, glittering with a jewelled radiance almost equalling the splendor of noonday. The quaint device, the lone star, the single eye, the death's head and cross-bones, the scrip, the staff, the purse, the crystal basin, the floating banners, where strong and noble men, dressed in all the paraphernalia of pomp and greatness, glittering with gold and mystery, are met to rehearse their kindly charities, and give good gifts unto men? Or shall it be the shady lodge, beneath the broad blue canopy of

heaven, with myriad stars hung out to light the noiseless, swiftly-gathering band of brothers, no vigilant watch can trace, no softly-tracing *posse* of nightly patrol can lay a hand upon,—their wise brains teeming with plans to save themselves, or brothers', perchance, a nation's freedom?"

"Here, Halvor, take my hat, and boots, too; I am ready to give in, since your's the high prerogative—the extent an honor of which I dream not—to teach me all the mysteries."

Steadily the twain kept on their way, jostled occasionally in the crowded streets, by some hasty denizen of the city, or suburban, eager to gain their homes. But they passed not without observation; men, women, and children, gazed at them, often turning back to take another look at the lions, who were obliged to hasten their steps for fear of being followed by the crowd of loiterers. They reached the Tremont House, ascended the stately steps, and palatial staircase, and traversed long corridors with many windings and turnings, where one might search and find not for many a weary hour.

Magically a door flew open, and they entered a sumptuous chamber, fit for a monarch; a nimble-

footed, animated attendant arranged everything for their comfort. Doffing their beavers, they seated themselves to enjoy the genial warmth of the glowing anthracite kindling in the grate.

The attendant was disposing the crimson damask more closely about the windows, while Halvor, as we will still call him for brevity sake, raised his eyes and continued speaking, as though he had just recovered from the abyss of struggling thought in which he had been lost.

“No! No! hope not, think not in me to find that blessed privilege, that high prerogative of which you speak; were mine the precious boon to read mens souls, and lead them, 'tis true I should wish no blot nor stain to mar our nations heraldry, and that proudly, O, how proudly on every breeze as now, on land and seas, might wave the stars and stripes. Flag of the free! but I too might say, literally, I know nothing.”

The curtain dropped from the nerveless hand of the attentive Michael, who, for a moment forgetting his place, stood with mouth and eyes wide open; a glance from Eldridge recalled him to himself, and he quickly disappeared to his accustomed station in the ante-room adjoining the office.

"Mike, Mike," called out one of his companions, "I say, what kind o' chaps is them you've been waiting on in No. —," intimating the situation of the room by a quick motion of the thumb over his shoulder.

Mike, with the latent wonder still gleaming in his eyes, put on a very wise look, and answered, "I know nothing."

"Whew! Jehoshaphat! *know nothings* be they? Well then why didn't you creep into the closet, under the chairs, behind the curtains, slide between the panels, make yourself into a foot-ball, in short do anything rather than leave?"

"The fact is, I was so taken by surprise, so flusterfied like, hearing the one with the dark eyes talking about his high prerogative to teach the secrets, I didn't think, nor dare neither to play tricks on them."

"Ah! Mike," continued the first speaker, "that shows you'r rather verdant, I only wish I had been there instead of you, you'd see what I'd found out."

Thus, from lip to lip, in mysterious whispers, was spoken the magic word of know nothing in connection with the strangers.

The occupants of the chamber are still engaged in

friendly chat, unmindful of the commotion below stairs concerning them.

“Halvor, I have been often surprised at the number of smart, enterprising men, who go out to the gold regions, and more surprised at the rapid strides of civilization, and the advancement and improvement of society, compared with the number of human beings from every grade and nation, without law or order, making little of safety and less of comfort, even when we first went there. Now, the Cities are subject not only to good order and the best regulations, but they abound in the comforts, luxuries and splendors of olden Cities. Nay, more, on the same plan of rapid advancement, I believe they are already beginning to live too fast. As to society, all who can dress and appear respectably are admitted to the best.”

“Yes, Ethan, and their cry is, give us more energetic men, more worthy citizens, for there is room enough, room enough yet. But, Ethan, I supposed when we parted company there, that great country would be your home by adoption.”

“Exactly ; not that we don’t appreciate our birth-place ; we value it more ; we glory in it, blessed by our pilgrim fathers, from among the ashes of whose altar

fires, our noblest emotions and truest thoughts have been nurtured ; but I learned 'twere well to improve the one talent, not stand back inactive, or quietly suffer ourselves to remain in ignorance upon any subject, because there are so many wise ones in the way before us, but do the best we can, even if we cannot see honor and distinction awaiting us."

"Ethan I learned a similar lesson by comparing the people and institutions of other countries with our own, and watching from a distance the thoughts and movements of our own republic."

"In reference to your question Halvor, why am I here, you will understand me better if I break off and make you acquainted with the history of another."

"Ah ! something after the old sort, an '*affaire de cœeur* ?'"

"Yes ; I have it written, and will hand you the manuscript to peruse at your leisure. As for myself, I made up my mind to try gold digging ; very sanguine that I should get a heap of gold rocks in no time ; implements to work with, land to be worked and water privilege, cost me a good round sum, but then we are going to get it all back again so soon, I tried to think the outlay quite excusable. Accordingly started with the

first company going to ——. On arrival hired two sturdy laborers to remove the sand and gravel, and we commenced operations. I worked for three days, then *caved*; spunky say you? Well, the treasure might lie buried, for me, if there could be no easier method of getting it, than we had then. It was my business to sift and wash the dirt and gravel, a long trough-like seive being used for that purpose formed with strips of board for the sides, and parallel rods of iron or narrow strips of board placed across the bottom. One's hands had to be constantly used passing the dirt back and forth with the water in the seive, picking out the ore and gathering the dust. The first day, my hands blistered and the skin peeled off, the second and third the nails were worn below the quick, and such excruciating tortures you may have read of, but I hope you have never suffered."

Halvor smiled his sympathy, while Ethan continued:

"The old miners told me I should get used to it, but I had had enough of it, consequently discharged my men, sold a part of my apparatus, leaving what I could not sell, retaining only a lease of the ground to rent to other adventurers, and sat down to count the profits.

As I told you, I had spent some hundreds to commence with, for which I gained an amount of ore and dust worth about fifteen dollars; not half enough to pay my board. I assure you I prized every particle of it, and would not part with it; since then I have had it made into this ring," displaying a heavy one worn upon his little finger. "I keep it as a *souvenir* of gold digging. But it is time for me to be at Judge Merrill's; will you go with me? Your appearance will create quite a sensation."

"No, Ethan, I am not fond of notoriety, besides I have more important affairs on hand; I must first see Annette. My messenger returned answer that she was out this morning, and would be engaged until evening; I wish to spend a few hours with her before presenting myself to the rest of the family."

"Ah! quite natural that she should be engaged, I hear that she is to be married soon."

"Is it indeed so? I could have wished it otherwise, but have no right to complain, she may have felt the need of sympathy, and a strong arm to lean upon, myself in voluntary banishment, whose greatest pleasure

it should have been to have given her a brother's affection."

"Well, Halvor, I must be off, here is the manuscript I spoke of, for your perusal," and he handed him a package of neatly written paper rolled together and fastened by an elastic band.

"What! from father Anselmo of Mexico? Possible."

"Do you know him Halvor?"

"Yes; that is, I have met him, and anything concerning him will be doubly interesting."

"How did you know the papers were his?"

"I suspected, rather than knew it; for here are some small characters upon the margin which he taught me to decipher. Nothing of importance though."

"Do you know his history?"

"I know that he wears the garb of a monk, and he may have been a priest of the Holy Order, as he calls the Ecclesiastic's of the Church of Rome."

"He seemed to me remarkably sincere and candid; yet, notwithstanding all his efforts, he could not always keep his thoughts and judgment in papistical subjection. But good-night, Hal, come to my office to-morrow, early."

"Yes; good-bye."

CHAPTER V.

“He seeks the needy in distress,
The widow and the fatherless,
And strives with all his means to bless.”

“What a noble looking man your friend is,” remarked Mrs. Eldridge, when they were once more at home. “Why did you never tell me more about him? and you went away together.”

“Yes, he stood by me like a brother; he’s a noble hearted fellow, he will stand by one in trouble to the very death; he used to be rather a wild boy before he went away, but seems more thoughtful now. Where formerly you would admire him, even as a stranger, for his humorous wit and talent, you would love him now for his candid interest, so full of sympathy, as though his great heart could take in all the wants of his race, and plan or help to provide for them. But he is so modest, and has such a quiet way of doing things.”

“I wonder, hub., why he never got married.”

“Married, ha! ha! he will never get married I assure you. He is not a lady’s man.”

“From what I saw of him to-day, he can be a very agreeable companion.”

“That is true, but it takes a very peculiar woman to suit him. I remember he used to say he had no doubt but that there was one made for him, but some other might have claimed her through mistake, or they might never meet. He used to declare in some of his facetious moods that he should know the one at first sight.”

“Well, dear, I hope we shall see him often while he is in town.”

CHAPTER VI.

“Where burns the loved hearth brightest,
Cheering the social breast?
Where beats the fond heart lightest,
Its humble hopes possessed?

Go! leave thy gift unoffered
Beneath religions dome,
And be thy first fruits proffered
At home! dear home!”

WITH strange confusion of emotions, the exile ascended his fathers steps and rang the bell. He was ushered into the hall by a stranger.

“I wish to see Miss Hazel.”

The man eyed him rather more freely than was his wont, took a step or two forward, then turned, almost doubting the propriety of his own actions, as he glanced at the stern countenance of the stranger, and inquired if he would “send up his card.”

No; just tell her I wish to see her.”

“And who the deuce are you!” thought the waiter, as he began to climb the stairs, not knowing what better to do.

Halvor followed close upon him, as he threw open the door of the private parlor, and called "Miss Hazel a gentleman wishes to see you."

"Who is it, Thomas?"

But before the man could answer, Halvor had thrust himself forward with a quick step, and come to a full stop in the middle of the room.

Annette rose, gazed at him a second, and with the cry, "brother!" sprung forward; his strong arms were already open to receive her, and quickly folded her in a loving embrace, where she rested quivering with the intense excitement of the moment.

He led her to a seat upon the divan near, she clinging to him, and looking up in his face, as though he formed part of her existence.

Speedily time flew by; the small hours of a new day began to be numbered, before Halvor arose to leave. Chiding both himself and sister, for allowing him to keep her up so late, he would not be persuaded to remain, saying he had business which would render it more convenient for him to stop "down town" until his father's return from a journey, being expected in a few days; but he would come every day to see her, if his

presence would be no drawback upon her preparations and arrangements for the future.

“I have also brought you a few choice presents in the way of gems and curiosities, to prove to you that you were not forgotten during my travels; they will make quite an addition to your collection for your new home.”

“Thank you; you are a darling brother. I shall prize them highly, and you, always used to be so thoughtful for me.

CHAPTER VII.

“ How beautiful it is for man to die
Upon the walls of Zion ! to be called
Like a watch-worn and weary sentinel,
To put his armor off, and rest in heaven.”

WILLIS.

RETURNED to his hotel, and seated once more *alone* in his comfortable room, Halvor slowly unfolded the manuscript, and commenced the narrative :—

“ Many years ago, standing in full view of the broad expanding ocean, a short distance from the thriving and beautiful city of Portland, might be seen a fine mansion, the residence of a gentleman who had retired from business, by the name of Walton, better known as General Walton. Here he resided with his wife, a gentle-minded, loving woman, devoting his time to his handsome grounds, and the education of his three interesting children, Geneva, Edwin, and Altha ; each shared a father’s pride and a mother’s doating fondness. Yet, the most endearing affections of the happiest home circles are not always exempt from sorrow and trouble.

Happy are they who have learned to bear them as the chastening messengers of a kind Father's love.

It was a cold bitter day in the month of February; the snow lay upon the ground many feet deep—enough, it would seem, to last until midsummer; long icicles were pendant from every building, tree, and fence likewise, where there was one uncovered by the white dazzling snow.

The cold was intense: even the city physician took more than his usual precaution of wrapping in fur coat, mufflers, and leggins, while preparing for his daily visit to his patients. He drew rein opposite General Walton's and throwing them upon the back of his well-trained animal, sprung lightly out of his gig and up the snow-path, attempting, as he went, to get up the circulation, entered the parlor, and finding no one, passed forward to the sick room. All the family were assembled there, a sad, sad group. The once proud, robust form of Mr. Walton was stretched upon a couch, pale, emaciated, helpless. Deep lines were furrowed across the forehead and darkened around the mouth, caused by wearying sickness and pain. The eyes sunken in the head, at times for a moment or two, were deeply

brilliant from excitement. The physician advanced to the bedside, where Mrs. Walton sat, half reclining against the pillows for support, and took the hand she had been holding in her own, and had dropped upon the coverlid at his approach.

“Well, General, how do you feel to-day?”

“Doctor, my lamp grows dim. I shall soon know what it is to make an exchange of worlds.

“I had hoped to find you more comfortable.” And he turned aside, looked out of the window, then among the cups and glasses upon the table. Many anxious eyes were upon him, dreading to read what their fearful hearts knew but too well. He busied himself preparing some simple anodyne to procure something like rest, which the nearly exhausted patient seemed so much to need, then turned again to the couch. The General held out his hand; the doctor took it, and retained it several moments.

“Doctor,” he spake at last, feebly and slowly, “thank you for all your kind attention to me and mine, these long months past. I thought I never should get up from that fever last fall, and so it has proved. O, be always kind to these dear ones I leave behind, as you

have been to me. Farewell." He turned his face away for a moment, as though to sound in his heart again that funeral knell—farewell!

The good Doctor Burton drew himself back, and looked around as though he hoped to gain fortitude from the vain wish that he could say something more cheerful to the family. He was used to such scenes, yet he could not witness them unmoved, and his heart would bleed for the stricken ones.

This parting with Doctor Burton seemed but the precursor of more trying and painful ones for the family. For a time he lay quiet and calm. The nurse passed quickly to and from the room; also Edwin and Altha, when they could no longer contain the swelling grief in their young bosoms, would leave the room for a moment to still their sorrow-laden thoughts, then back again in sight of the dear one.

"Deacon Breck, you are still here."

"Yes, brother; how do you feel now?"

"I know in whom I have believed, and, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil. You will stay with us to-night."

"Yes, yes; as long as you wish."

“Deacon, when I am gone,” and his voice was firm and clear as usual, “be faithful to the trust I leave with you. See my will carried out as I have expressed it. There is pleasure in the thought, even at this moment, that with good management, I leave them all enough for comfort, and a trifle to spare. My wife can look after the girls; but I want you to look after Edwin. O, how I have wished him to become a wise and worthy man. This has been my prayer; see that he has every advantage for the advancement of his morals and learning. I have spoken to you of my thoughts and plans before; but remind you of them, knowing that you will hold them more sacred, that you will remember my dying request. You have been a good neighbor, a kind friend; may we meet again in that world where is known no parting of friends.” Again the solemn quiet—the clock upon the mantle seemed still alive, as it ticked clear and monotonous as the death watch at midnight. Once or twice the lips of the dying man moved, as if the mind wandered, perhaps in prayer. But the tones were too low for even the breathless dear ones to interpret their meaning; a shiver, and he partly raised himself upon the pillow, and threw his arms

around the neck of his wife; one long agonizing kiss and he leaned back; his children came quickly to his bedside and shared each a parting kiss, a last fond embrace; something like a stifled groan was heard from Edwin, who came last, and the father's eye rested upon him earnestly and lovingly, yet sorrowfully. "My son be to them a father, brother, all, when I am gone." Gently the eyelids dropped, and closing down shut out the dim light of earth. Still, still, oh! how still was the chamber of death.

"He sleeps in Jesus, let us leave him with his God," repeated the Deacon, solemnly breaking the chill silence creeping around the sorrowing hearts. Then the fountain of tears was broken, drowning the ghastly spirit sorrow, until it sinks to sighs and a low wail for the dead. The children gathering around the mother, all walk away; leaving husband and father to an unbroken rest. Months passed away. The widow sadly brooded over her loss; in every look, in every movement, you could well fancy you heard her saying, "I'm a'weary, I'm a'weary, I would that I were dead."

Edwin had entered the Deacon's store, at his suggestion, until some place was decided upon for him to go, where to complete his studies. The girls remained at

home with their mother; already with the buoyant spirit of youth, anticipating their future pleasures and pursuits.

One evening in the early autumn, at twilight, the girls walked out to meet their brother on his return from the store, and meeting with some associates remained much longer than they had intended.

The Deacon dropped in occasionally to see the family. Genevea and Edwin who never thought of him before, except as their father's friend, had begun to watch him with the anxious, instinctive curiosity of children, and to feel a dislike toward him, imagining him sinister and cold hearted. Not so with Mrs. Walton, she could see him only through the mind of her deceased husband, which thought would not admit of doubt; all must be right.

On this evening, when the children were out, he had casually dropped in. He sat a little time rather uneasily, making remarks on the weather and prospect of crops, then clearing his throat began:

"Mrs. Walton, I have for some time delayed speaking definitely of your affairs, not wishing to harrow your sad thoughts and grief, but it seems altogether expedient that I should not wait longer."

“What is it?” she asked, lifting up her eyes and resting the glance of her full grey orbs upon him, taken as she was quite by surprise.

“In regard to General Walton’s estate, the property and debts, after all is settled, I find there will be much less remaining than he gave me reason to suppose, and it makes it all the more difficult to arrive at the amount, from the fact that I find among the papers no will.”

“No will! what do you mean? No will!” she screamed, almost hissed, in his ears, so husky was her voice from excitement. “I saw it written by ’Squire Cram, and enclosed with the valuable papers in the box, and locked and sealed, and handed to you for safe keeping. No will! I cannot comprehend it, sir!” and she bent forward, regarding him with a searching look “Tell me how you account for it.”

“The very thing madam, in which I hope you can help me. I find a copy of a will, which must have been the one drawn up at first, and which, by accident, was taken, and placed in the box for the *bona fide* will, while the true one was brushed away with the waste papers.”

“Impossible!”

“Just so it seemed to me at first. But can you not see how such an accident might have happened? I can account for it in no other way.”

“O dear, what shall we do? But why,” said she, her eye lighting up with a new thought, “why did you not mention it sooner.”

“Why, I did not think it necessary to read the papers immediately after the general’s decease. Therefore, when I did so and discovered it, I could not think of any other way to account for it, and conferred immediately with Lawyer Cram, and he thinks as I do, that the copy must have been accidentally taken for the proper will, and the true one destroyed, or laid away in something.”

The good lady was again taken aback, and dropped into her seat, crouching forward. “My children, O, my children, why did this thing happen? It is not for myself I care, but for you, who will be wronged.”

The deacon smiled,—quite a satisfactory smile for him,—and continued, “I hope you will find the will, or at least think where it might have been put; unless you can, I see no way but to go on and settle the estate by

law, and it will take a long time, as there are accounts to be brought in, and bills to be collected."

Still the widow's thoughts were in a tumult, and she sat half unconscious of what she was saying. But he had said his say, and prepared to leave, screwing up his features into as sympathising a form as possible. "My dear madam, how deeply I feel for you. I had all along feared and dreaded this, and I would not speak to cause you trouble, until I had thought and done everything I could. But take courage; you may find the will," while his eye said, "I *know* you won't, and what if you do not;—can't you settle the property between yourselves."

"I will talk with you another time," said Mrs. Walton nervously, "at present I can think of nothing."

Deacon Breck dropped his head, sunk his chin behind his collar, well pleased with the move he had made, and the advantage he had gained.

A little while and the girls returned with their brother; they were startled on beholding their mother, who, they saw at a glance, was suffering from new trouble, and began to fear they had been gone too long.

"Mother," said Geneva, walking hastily forward, and

lifting her head, which was resting on the arm of the sofa, "are you ill, dear mother ; I did not think we had been gone very long."

Mrs. Walton raised her eyes sorrowfully, "I could have wished, my children, you had been here, then I should have been spared the repetition of bad news."

"What bad news?" all exclaimed in a breath. "Let us hear quick, mother," cried Edwin, cheerfully, and we will help you to bear it."

"Put away your bonnets and shawls, and we will talk about it," which order seemed given in this instance partly to restore her own failing calmness. "The trouble my children," said she, at length, "is concerning your father's affairs. Deacon Breck tells me there is no will to be found."

"No will ; the liar !" exclaimed Edwin springing to his feet.

"No will !" said Geneva, proudly tossing her head.

"Explain it, mother," put in Altha, who, though the youngest, and by far the most quiet, was not the least quick-sighted.

Here the mother gave a detailed account of what had passed, to her excited children. Edwin, who had seen

fourteen winters, felt himself quite a man, and walked the floor with rapid strides, making his footsteps as heavy as possible. His eyes flashing with anger, his cheek burning with excitement, occasionally speaking a bitter word against their guardian. Geneva stood proudly before the fire, after they had ceased talking and conjecturing, as though some great thoughts of villainy had been presented to her mind for the first time. Altha sat by her mother, a tear dropping from her long eyelashes, for the grief of others, which she could not comprehend. At last, Edward decided he would call over to see Lawyer Cram, notwithstanding his mother's assurance, that it would do no good. The next morning the girls met him on his return, but he would not tell them anything until he reached the house. Then, said he, "Mother, whatever old Cram knows or does n't know, he would n't tell me a word. My opinion is, mother, that he knows more than he would like all the world to know."

"But your opinion, my son, would not weigh in a court of justice."

"I know it, mother, else he'd stand a chance to get some of his deserts, along with some others I know; but

I've a mind never to set my foot in old skinflint's store again."

"Don't get so excited, Edwin, and talk so rudely about the man; perhaps it is as he says, and it will come out all right in the end, and all for the best. I think you had better go back to the store. Your guardian may be induced to look after our interests better than he otherwise would; besides, I see nothing we can do at present."

"Well, I think he needs looking after; that's a fact."

"Be careful, my son, and not do wrong."

"Well, I'll be careful;" and as he moved toward the door he called to Altha "good bye, little sis," and he caught hold of her long golden curls, that floated like a veil over neck and shoulders, and threw them in a tangled mass upon her head. She was his pet, and took all his boyish freaks in good part, knowing what real brotherly love he had for her.

After much useless talk and labor, it was decided that the property should be reduced to available funds and kept for the benefit of the children. The Deacon never failed to remind them often, that the sum would

be small, not even precluding the necessity of laboring to assist themselves. The house, grounds and furniture, most of it must be disposed of, as unsuited to the place they must occupy ; and all were of one mind that they chose to go far away, rather than remain near their old home, and did, at times, feel like murmuring and repining at what appeared to them a perverse fate ; I said all, but should have excepted the mother, she knew the value of kind neighbors, and well tried friends and acquaintances, who had surrounded her in joy and sorrow, and would gladly have remained among them, however humble her lot, yet, if her children's welfare demanded the sacrifice, she was willing to leave all for their sake. The widow held her thirds, therefore, she felt that she had a trifle to fall back upon in case of sickness or dire necessity, in any uncalculable form. How little one living in comfort and luxury, without any knowledge of the minor details of living, can comprehend the chances and changes of a future, and the expenditures for a livelihood. It was well for our young friends, that their prospects in anticipation looked less formidable than they might prove ; yet, even with the darkest side of the picture before them, with courage

and perseverance, we have no doubt but they will come off conquerors, as others have done before them.

At this time there was loafing around that part of the city, where Deacon Breck's store was situated, two young men, suspected of having morals and principles as unstable and disorderly as were their habits and circumstances. Deacon Breck often employed one or the other of them to do small jobs, such as loading or assisting to unload goods, and stowing away heavy and unweildy articles, for which service he gave them a drink, a few cigars, or pipe and tobacco. They had been intelligent boys, and had got an idea that they were born for a respectable or better situation; but they had no means to carry out any plan of their own, and did not know or feel that they could proceed without some little assistance, or well directed counsel which their parents were unable to give. They had been too often impressed with the idea, that if rich, they might do any thing, but if poor, no one would care for them.

How little do persons who have outlived childhood and youth think or dream of the effect of bitter lessons, or the repetition of them, to cramp the energies of younger minds.

The two boys lived near each other, and together

formed plans for the future, and idly waited for something to "turn up" in their favor. They did not think, or did not know, they must first discover their own ability and power to cope with obstacles, and then push ahead ; but from waiting and idling, they began to feel the opinion that others, more fortunate, expressed, that they themselves were little worthy of confidence and respect.

CHAPTER VIII.

—“ Behind the cloud of death,
Once, I beheld a sun ; a sun which gilt
That sable cloud, and turned it all to gold.
How the graves altered ! fathomless as hell !
A real hell to those who dreamed of Heaven ! ”

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

A FEW days subsequent to the events narrated in the last chapter, one of these young loafers entered the store in the absence of the Deacon, and coolly stretched himself upon the farther end of the counter, there being no one but Edwin present, who was engaged in arranging various articles upon the shelves, which he continued taking from a package just opened.

Edwin having been cautioned against associating with young men of his habits, never ventured into conversation with him, though he often felt pity for him, for becoming so unworthy, when he had talents to make a man. Ike, who answered to this euphonious title, spoke at length, “ Ed., how can you endure to stay here and drudge for the Deacon ? Why don’t you pay up old scores and leave ? ”

"I do sometimes feel almost savage enough to do so ; but then there is mother and the girls."

"Oh ! Ed. ; I only wish I was in your place, I'd do it. You know how I hate him ; I am ready to kill myself at times for doing his drudgery. But he knows I can't resist a treat. He knows, too, that I have not courage enough to stand up after my work is done and say, 'Pay me something better.' How his look creeps through my flesh to my very toes, as it says, 'What else are you good for?'"

"But Ike, why don't you turn over a new leaf in your day-book of respectability?"

"Yes, Ed., and write it down like the last ; for I should meet Old Crooked Sticks, with his *small jobs*, or some of the *boys*, just returned from somewhere, having performed some wonderful exploit, 'to stand treat,' when away would go all my good resolutions. It's no use ; I tell you it's no kind o' use. Howsomever, Ed., if you will just 'keep dark' and let me serve the Deacon a turn, 'I'll set quits,' with him and then reform."

Edwin had no time to make any inquiries, for Ike suddenly threw himself from his recumbent position, exclaiming, "there comes his pictur," and thrusting his

hands into his pockets, strode rapidly out of the shop and down the street, looking indifferent and lawless as possible. As the owner of the store entered, he gazed around with a stern, consequential air, to assure himself that all was right, then ensconcing himself in his arm-chair, he adjusted his gold-bowed spectacles, and took up the paper. After a few moments, he inquired, addressing Edwin, but never raising his eyes from the paper, "What is that vagabond Ike hanging round now for?"

"Can't say sir," was the response, and Edwin continued brushing down the counter. Another pause and his employer went on interrogatively.

"I think your mother will make a good thing of it, by removing to Roxbury, Mass. I liked those English people, Lord, I believe you call them, who visited here a few weeks last summer; they were so affable and agreeable; a distant connection of your father's, eh?—and they have the means. No doubt they will be a great advantage to the girls, and help you considerably."

Edwin made no reply to this long speech, yet his brow flushed with anger, for he saw in it the calculating spirit of their guardian, wishing them well out of the way, and willing to thrust them upon any one who

would be likely to have any thought or care for them. That day ended, as all days have an end. His employer retired home early, leaving him to guard his property, attend upon the few customers that might call, close the shop and then seek his hard, temporary couch among cotton bales, flour barrels and tea-chests, over the sales room, where his gurdian had wished him to sleep, in order to "be on hand a little earlier in the morning," as he expressed it.

Edwin had put up the last shutter, and was closing the door, when a hand was thrust in at the opening. Edwin started in surprise, then drew the door open a little to see who might be there, when Ike, with a chuckle and a bound, sprang past him into the room, expressing his satisfaction at having gained entrance by a sort of defiant grin.

"What do you want now, Ike?"

"O, something important, of course; but haul alongside," said he, drawing a seat near the stove where there had been a fire, for the evening was cool, "and I will tell you."

Edwin began to feel some few twinges in the region of self-esteem, on finding himself in juxtaposition with so questionable a visitor.

"Well," began Ike, "how are the folks to hum?"

"Well as usual," was the answer.

"Now, I must say, Old Crooked Sticks served you a trick concerning that ere *will!* fact, Ed.; he ought to suffer for it. I'll tell you what, I've a sort o' hankerin' arter some o' these ar notions to balance accounts between him and me."

"But I don't settle any such accounts as you may have against Deacon Breck; true, he has wronged me and those dear to me, but I shall not play tricks upon him; I have enough to do to look after my own affairs."

"O, don't fret yourself," said Ike, who always adopted an outlandish style of language, when, as he termed it, feeling for the soft place in the skull of his victims. "Keep cool; all we want, that is, Mose and I, is, that you should be quiet, if you hear any little noise in the back court or down below in here to-night, or if anything is missing to-morrow, or any time after this, you won't know anything about it of course. Come, now, you can't say you would n't like it."

"Perhaps I might Ike, if I was not here, as I am, it is out of the question, and I shall feel it my duty to be on the watch to prevent mischief."

"To preach against us, and get us jugged, eh?"

"I should regret to do that; but you know it would not be safe for you or me either, after such an affair as you propose."

"O, we have arranged it safe enough; but if you don't want to list, nuff sed."

A rustling was heard, which sounded like a person brushing against the shutter. Ike raised his head and listened; when all was still, he arose, signifying his readiness to go home. Edwin unfastened the door to let him out, when, to his astonishment, Mose crowded himself in.

Edwin regarded the two a moment, then putting on all the manliness he could command, addressed them — "Come, boys, you must be off; it's getting late, and I want to shut up."

"Wait a little," said Mose, "the street is full of people returning from the concert, and it would never do for us to be seen going out of here at this time, on your account, Ed.; it would n't hurt us; we are known; if we are not, at any rate people give us the name of being wicked."

Poor Edwin he was in an unpleasant position, hesitating, half in pity for his companions, because they had

no better reputation, half for himself, fearing if they were discovered it would do him no good;—thus the two turned back to wait a little longer. Mose began collecting the live and dead coals and brands of hemlock in the great box stove, making quite a pile, over which he warmed his stiffened fingers. Said he, “Old Crooked Sticks has been holding forth in the vestry to-night. I stepped into the entry as I came along, just for the fun of the thing, and the way the deacon sentenced us, ungodly wretches, to perdition, and such a prayer as he poured forth for the widow and the down-trodden; if it had been any other man! but it seemed so hypocritical, and canting-like, and I kept constantly thinking of his sins, as old grandmother says, ‘forgot the beam in my own eye hunting after the mote in his.’ One such man would make honest people forget to say their prayers.”

“You don’t mean to count yourself in that class?” laughed Ike, rather bitterly.

“Sartin; had quite an inkling that way once; but have so much to do looking after other folks, think less about it now.”

“Good Mose, go on, and give us some more of your experience.”

"Some other time perhaps. By the way, did you know that Underhill cleared this afternoon, with his wife and babies."

"No! How? Where?" exclaimed both of his listeners.

"Why, you see, Nat had just got through settling with his creditors, since his failure some months ago, without anything. Well, it seems the deacon had pretended to be a great friend of Nat's, who went to him telling his trouble, and how hard his misfortune was, only hoping he could save a little for his wife and children.

"The Deacon thought there was no harm in saving a little; his cottage, for instance. He would make it up to them when he got started again. Nat jumped at the suggestion; but then, who would hold it, was another question; of course, he must 'swear out.' Here, the Deacon volunteered his services; he would n't do it on any account, only he thought so much of Nat and his wife. He was sure he would make it up to them again forthwith; the deed and papers were handed over to him for safe keeping, until Nat got settled up and then he was to have them returned to him. He also hinted to Nat's wife, that anything she wanted to reserve, just have it re-

moved to his house until after the auction sales of furniture were over, he would pretend he had bought them, as he had the cottage, and then she could have them; accordingly, a nice sofa, a mahogany secretary, worth seventy-five dollars, filled with articles of plate, some jewelry and other valuables were conveyed to his house. Mrs. Underhill persuading her husband there could be no harm in it, if the Deacon approved of it, as he did. And now, when they wanted the things back again, according to promise, the Deacon would not give up an article, nor a paper. Had not Nat taken an oath that he was not worth anything, and had n't they said the Deacon bought their furniture? All was his, and they had nothing to do but leave. Poor Nat! I pitied him. Such a cruel friend! He went back to the house, after his wife and children were put in the wagon, and leaning his head upon the mantle-shelf, he cried; and then he's got to carry the load with him, of bitter thought, if he had only been honest with his creditors, he'd a been better off; so Ed., you see your's is not the only case; if it was, there might be a little more excuse, perhaps, for the old curmudgeon."

Here Ike stretched his limbs and gave a long yawn, started up with, "Come Ed; my boy, let's have a glass and we'll be off."

Edwin, who had listened attentively to every word and look of Mose while he had been talking, was highly excited, and brought forward the bottles, as directed.

"Draw the corks carefully my boy," said Ike, "we want to put them in again, and snake the critters back good as new, after we have done with them; we are going to pay for them, sure; but you can wait before putting the money in the drawer till you think there will be no questions asked."

Edwin felt every moment as though he was getting himself into the mire of trouble, and wished his visitors would leave, but had not courage to say so, for fear of their ridicule; he had not courage to own he was afraid of their company.

"Come Ed." said Mose, "you must drink with me."

"I do not drink."

"Oh don't call it drinking, just taking a glass of wine, and probably we shall never meet again; our boat is in the cove two miles below here, and to-night we are off, no knowing when to return. I should like to feel that we had left one good fellow behind."

Edwin, thus flattered, accepted the glass and drank the contents. Well might the angels in heaven weep

over the ruin of that dear boy, or his first step towards it; and dark the line drawn by the recording angel of the sin of the tempters.

“Now, you must take a little of this ‘*white-eye*’ with me,—no excuse. It would n’t be fair to drink with Mose and not with me. A spoonful of brandy won’t hurt you.”

The next morning Edwin found himself lying upon the bench that ran along by the counter, with a blinding headache and eyes burning like two coals of fire. He remembered he had felt terrible sick the night before, and then again, all was confusion. Slowly and painfully he dragged himself up, and began to put the store in order. The deacon had been called away on business, and did not return until nearly noon. But Edwin felt miserably wretched, waiting, with a guilty trembling, his coming. Often he would repeat, “Why did I suffer them to stop? Why was I so weak as to drink?” “Truly the wages of sin is death.” Where now was his mother’s hope, his sisters’ pride? Sorely had he been tempted, and how dreadful might be the end? The morning sun shining in upon him seemed less cheerful than usual, bringing no happy, peaceful

feeling to his heart. Because he had sinned the world looked gloomy. Every familiar countenance appeared as though it must hide a cold and selfish heart, which would hastily judge and harshly upbraid him for his fault, as though from their minds would vanish, in the twinkling of an eye, the memory of his former good conduct, leaving only a blank leaf for the searching gaze of the *curioso*. Again and again he turned aside, as though to hide himself from poignant, remorseless thought, or, burying his face in his hands, wept tears of bitterness. How futile to save him from the impending *denouement*. Soon after Deacon Breck returned to his store, a citizen entered, bringing a package of woolen socks, which he had found upon one of the unfrequented streets leading from the city, to ascertain, if possible, who might have been the owner thereof. This was, indeed, an unlooked-for misfortune. Edwin bent low over the desk upon which he was writing, trembling with fear; respiration almost ceased, and he felt no power to move. His first thought was to deny all knowledge of any missing articles, and accordingly, he acted without farther reflection. The package was immediately recognized as belonging to the deacon's store, and Edwin

called forward and questioned. He gave them no satisfaction. Darker and more threatening appeared the countenance of his employer, while examining the premises. The lock and shutters did not show signs of having been worked upon, besides the two men reasoned, no person could force an entrance without awaking Edwin. Even if such a thing were possible, he would have discovered some trace of them in their work of removing or deranging the goods ; when, if he had not been cognizant of it, he would have made it known immediately. A thorough search was instituted and a lawyer next door called in to examine the books and papers.

CHAPTER IX.

“ 'Tis hard to give thee up,
And thy dark sin! O, I could drink the cup,
If from this wo its bitterness had won thee.”

WILLIS.

WHILE his employer, with the assistance of others, was thus engaged, Edwin hastened home. He tried to appear calm as usual; he spoke a few words to his mother, then went to his room; gathered a few trifling articles which he valued, and secreted them about his person. Passing out of the house, as though he would return to the store, he laid a hand lovingly upon Geneva's shoulder, and, stooping down, playfully kissed Altha, and lingered a moment or two with them in the hall. They felt afterwards that he looked sadder than usual while proceeding down the street, he turned to look at them, still standing in the doorway, and watching him quite out of sight. He must henceforth become an outcast, a wanderer, neglected and despised; even if a few charitable hearts, softened

toward him, endeavoring to excuse his fault, he would be none the wiser or happier.

Consternation filled every mind, when it was ascertained that three hundred dollars worth of goods were missing; and it was decided to put Edwin under arrest, until some further knowledge could be obtained concerning the missing property. But upon looking for Edwin, he was nowhere to be found. An officer was dispatched to his home in search of him, who was indeed surprised to learn that he had been gone two hours.

"I regret, madam," said the man, touching his hat, "but I must do my duty, and search the house for him."

Mrs. Walton sprung up with a cry of terror, and confronting the man, wildly demanded the object of his visit. Gently as possible he unfolded the unwelcome news, she clasped her hands, and sunk lifeless at his feet. Directing Geneva to call some one to assist in restoring her to consciousness, he then proceeded in his fruitless search, after which he turned his horse's head and galloped back to the city.

With a strength of purpose and understanding far superior to their years, Geneva and Altha endeavored to

comfort and console their mother. They hovered around her during the tedious hours of their first wretched and suffering night. They listened attentively to the faintest sound. If the rude wind jarred a door or easement, or the breeze rustled, the falling leaves and stirred the long arms of the giant oak that shaded their dwelling. They heard his step,—the bent branches, scratching upon the roof or striking upon the window panes, must be his knock ; and if a low wail or a faint moan sounded amid the forest trees, dying away over the fields, crouching along the fences, and disappearing like a *wierd* spirit in some shady dell, beneath some rocky cliff or cavern nook ; they started wild with excitement, fancying they heard his voice—his call. Fearfully they peered forth into the darkness, feeling that he must be looking upon them through the darkening shutter. Sickening, harrowing the thought, what had become of him. At one moment entreating, supplicating the Invisible Presence hovering around them, for their loved one's return ; the next, sinking down faint, exhausted, hope vanishing in the presence of grim despair. Gladly they welcomed the first grey dawn of the morning,

thoroughly benumbed, weary, and heart-sick, having taken neither rest nor refreshment for many hours.

“No news! No news!” called out a kind-hearted neighbor, coming in abruptly, making a great bustling noise, as though he had been searching for information. His face shining with hopeful, happy thought, bidding them be of good cheer. “No doubt,” he added, “the boy is innocent, and it is lucky he thought to leave until the guilty party is discovered. Take courage, my friends, he will return all in good time. True, the whole police have been on the look-out or tramp after him ever since he left, but they won’t find him; he’s safe enough by this time, and he’d better keep so, *a spell*, I reckon.”

How much a few kind words can do to lighten the heart crushed down with its heavy load of sorrow, though spoken in homely phrase.

“Do not fear,” he said, rising and going to the door, his eye filling with happy light and moistening with the dew of a tear. “There’s not a sparrow that falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father’s notice; he feeds the raven, and clothes the lilly;” and the kind-hearted neighbor was half way down the gravel walk leading from the door, when he ceased speaking; but

he had performed his little mission of love and charity, and he wanted no words.

Mrs. Walton speedily finished her arrangements for leaving the old homestead, as soon as she could realize that Edwin would be more likely to come to them in a new place than he would if they remained where they were; and as they settled in their new home, thrice widowed seemed the heart of that fond mother, mourning the uncertain fate of her darling boy.

Their English friends whom we have before spoken of, were all that friends could be. But even their kindest care and sympathy could not relieve her mind of its heavy weight of trouble. Their guardian withheld all of the property except a small pittance to the mother, and they were aroused too soon to the unwelcome knowledge that they must labor for a livelihood. Deathless seemed the energy, and exhaustless the strength of those high-souled, proud-hearted girls, toiling with hand and brain to secure an education, something like the one their father had planned for them, and still furnish all the comforts, with a few luxuries, of life, for their dearly loved, remaining parent. They made many friends, and many a beautiful home was kindly opened to them, many a peaceful asylum, where they

might find shelter from the fierce storms and warring elements of care and misfortune. But no! they had been too long accustomed to luxuries, in their own right, to bow down and worship, or crave bright gifts, except as fitting meed for honest endeavor, the which they might unshrinkingly and happily enjoy. Days, weeks and months passed away, and that gentle mother had lived, subdued in thought and effort; bent to earth like a bruised reed, whose branches and leaves had withered and crisped as the cherished springs of hope and love had failed. The one sinking away down in the dark earth, the other, afar off, perchance wandering in a distant clime. But now her health failed rapidly, and her daughters felt, for her sake, they must have assistance; consequently they wrote to their guardian, pleading for a small share of their patrimony, to cheer and brighten their mother's few remaining days. The answer came at last, cold and cruel in the extreme. To them it seemed the very climax of insult and despair. It ran thus:

“MADAM:—

If you cannot support your daughters, send them to me.”

How they had feared and trembled, as they felt they stood upon the very verge of downright poverty. But

now they were strong again ; wounded pride as well as love nerved them to almost superhuman efforts, to insure their mother every attention and delicacy her wasted energy and failing strength required. But, yet, still greater trials were in store for them. Slowly, surely, day by day, that loved parent faded and weakened ; all effort powerless to save. Patiently, resignedly, she watched and waited for the swift-winged messenger, bearing her summons from the shore of time ; her “lamp trimmed and burning ;” her soul purified and strengthened, through a heavenly faith from the precepts of our blessed Saviour.

O, how much of agony they endured with the last parting words, the last farewell glance. Let us shut out the light, and leave them for a time kneeling beside their cherished dead, nor suffer such sacred grief to be disturbed, even by the foot-fall of a friend. Long time they wept, and indulged their passionate grief as though they would not be comforted. The soul, void of happiness and pleasure, was filled with long shadows and grief-laden sighs.

CHAPTER X.

"All was so still, so soft, in earth and air,
You scarce would start to meet a spirit there ;
Secure that nought of evil could delight
To walk in such a scene, on such a night."

BYRON.

THE twilight deepens, softly, silently, night let down her mysterious curtains, darkening a world. Altha and her sister sat near a window in their cozy little parlor, some few weeks after their mother's decease, watching the noiseless shadows creeping around them. Altha murmured, "Night! beautiful, glorious night, I love thy mysterious presence, thou that fillest my soul with heavenly longings, with vague blessings, and ideal hopes; thou art a guardian spirit watching over the earth, and thoughtfully shutting out the light, that her weary, restless children may enjoy more quiet rest, more peaceful sleep. Sister I have been feeling all day as though we should have company to-night."

"Banish such foolish fancies, Altha; even our sainted mother cautioned you against them."

"I know it, but I cannot get rid of them ; they come unbidden, and stand like sentry-posts near the door of the inner temple, filled with the mysteries of our own mysterious being. And this thought or presentiment of a visitor makes me feel lonely, O how lonely ; all my heart is shut up, and I see myself in the future, wandering alone."

"Oh ! Altha dear, I fear you will never be fit for anything, if you indulge in such folly ; yet I have seen even your childish prophecies sway older minds and stronger nerves. Why is it ? I do not believe you are favored with any knowledge or power superior to others ; or that any mortal being possesses a gift to lift the veil which hides the future. I am happy there is no such power given, and that you do not possess it, for, indeed, you would be most miserable."

"Is it because you think I should learn all the mysteries of human hearts, and hate the world ?"

"No, sister Altha, you would think better of every one and everything, the more true knowledge you possessed. I remember when you were quite a child, your wishing for power to read the heart of man, and comprehend all its varied emotions, whether of pleasure or misery. And supposing that thoughtless wish was

granted, I shudder to think what might be your own destiny, for, be assured, you can learn such lessons only through your own trials and sufferings."

"Well, I suppose mine is a wayward heart or a wicked one. I can never realize anything; there is a maze before my eyes, yet I am restless, and fain would grow wise. Genius come fill me a goblet of thy choicest nectar, and give me to drink, I am thirsting, and fain would drink deep, deep, yea, and bathe my weary soul also in thy waters."

Altha, as she walked to and fro in their little parlor, speaking energetically, returned her sister's look of sad surprise, with a careless smile, which vanished as their only domestic threw wide the door and announced a visitor. Happy and cheerful was their greeting and welcome to Carey Landon, an old acquaintance and friend, who resided near the old homestead, as they termed their early home. He persuaded Geneva to return with him, in a few weeks, when he would come for her, to fill a beautiful home he had been preparing in the "City of Elms." The grounds, house, furniture and ornaments were unique and home-like. And with a happy heart, she took possession of her stately home. Altha declined staying with them except for an occa-

sional visit. "Why should I?" she would ask herself, "I have other cherished friends who care for me. Why should I not carry out, alone, the plans Geneva and myself suggested as a mutual benefit for each other."

Altha, once a quiet, gentle child, had grown to a young lady, beautiful and self-reliant, and buoyant as a happy thought. She possessed one of the few remarkable temperaments scattered along the wayside journey of life, which rise higher, nobler, and more enduring with every trial and misfortune; yet, with all a true woman's nature, pure, sensitive and lovely. Her mirror answered to herself in no very flattering terms concerning her beauty, — calm, tame, passionless in every feature, to others, remarkably handsome and intelligent; at times, when moved or excited, was strikingly brilliant, her large blue eyes when at rest beamed with a gentle lovelight, at others, proudly flashed with enthusiastic sentiment and feeling.

Altha often passed much time with her English friends. Upon this evening she was standing in the deep bay, window, looking forth upon the night. Lovely, how gloriously lovely the deep blue expanse of ether, through whose silvery veil myriads of diamond stars peeped out to cheer the lonely-hearted and young life's dreamer;

the crescent moon, with pendant horns, foretelling to the weather-seer the prospect of storm or shine for coming days, sailing swiftly, majestically on, no dark gathering clouds could stay or hide her, but, dashing them aside, she sped proudly on, on, as though spurning their frail barriers, set up to be defied or passed over in silence. Altha enjoyed the quiet night time ; it was the season of her soul's finest, noblest worship ; and, when contemplating the outer world of universal harmony and beauty, she forgot herself.

"I wish that you would choose me a companion of your thoughts," said Walter Marvin, stepping to her side.

"Indeed I fear you would be little benefitted by them. I have not a very peculiar gift of imparting them to others."

"But I am anxious to learn of your meditations ; can I not buy them ?"

"No, sir ; you cannot. Yet, if you are so anxious to hear, listen. I was letting fancy take a journey upon those light fleecy clouds, that have risen since I stood here, and trying, while I did so, to stretch the neck of my wits to discover the mysteries beyond, and finding

myself to be little wiser than when I set out, I turned a look downwards, and commenced a study of the lords and masters of this sphere. Puny, consequential man ! Then I began to compare the frivolty and folly of instilling into the minds of children lessons of station and rank, least they forget their own individual importance."

"You must have had a few lessons, one would judge from your tone," remarked a lady who had come up and remained standing behind the speaker.

"Think what you will, I hope my friends will not judge me too harshly."

"Fie, darling !" said the new comer, "why can't you talk nonsense ? Why can't you be merry and noisy as the rest ? Then no one would think you lonely and proud ; but you go about with that earnest, dreamy countenance, and those great deep eyes, turned within that every eye follows you, and every heart wants to open its own door and take you in. You should let them discover how you are most comeatable," and the speaker laughed carelessly, as though to do away with the effect of her words, then glided away as some one sat down to the piano, and played and sang the sweet familiar song of "The Switzer's Home."

Altha forgot the gentleman beside her as she listened; she bent her head upon her hand; the pearl drops glistened through her fingers; her bosom heaved, and brushing back the window drapery, she stepped upon the balcony and disappeared among the shrubbery in the garden.

“I am growing quite interested in this little *blonde*,” said Marvin to himself; “I had thought her quite an every-day young lady, but when she speaks, her eye and tone remind one that there is a soul hid away somewhere. I wonder she does not use her powers to advantage; if she did she’d have a crowd at her feet. Old Colonel Kensing remarked last evening, as she passed the hotel while we were standing upon the steps, that ‘she would fetch a fellow to the brink of love, without herself ever seeming to have given one thought to the subject in her whole life, and as soon as he made a declaration, away he’d go tumbling down the fearful precipice of rejection.’ But then the colonel pretends to know so much, and goes about with his iron-bound dictionary under his arm, quizzing everybody. I’d like to have a little flirtation with her myself, only I’m afraid she would take it in earnest. She seems to me

like a vine creeping up, up, and twining her arms around, searching for affection and drinking it up, and I cannot afford to get entangled.

"No, Marvin, it would never do for you. What could you do with a wife, with all the necessary appurtenances and incumbrances? But then, I could treat one well, and love her, too, if she was just right."

"Come, Walter; are you moonstricken, or love-smitten? standing here star-gazing," and the speaker familiarly laid his hand upon his shoulder, being, as Marvin termed it, "not only an acquaintance, but one of his kind."

Altha had often met one or both of these young men at Mr. Lord's. They were good company, belonged to good families, and had money plenty to spend on all occasions; therefore many of their faults were passed over lightly, their friends remarking, "rather high boys, 'tis true, but they will have 'sowed their wild oats' soon."

Marvin made answer: "Well, Robert, I am thinking how I shall beat you, with the 'Lady Alice' against your 'Black Warrior,' in a two-mile heat to-morrow."

"No, you don't;—but I thought I saw Miss Walton

here a moment ago. Have you spirited her away? I shall feel happier to get a few words from between those rosy lips, or a half smile from beneath those drooping eyelids. Come, Marvin, tell me what you think of her."

"Don't ask me; you know I have no fancy that way, consequently not a particle of good judgement. But Robert," continued Walter, wishing to change the conversation, "wasn't that joke at old Watty's well got up to-day?"

"What was it?" inquired Robert, a shadow passing over his handsome features, as though he regretted to have the subject uppermost in his mind, of Miss Walton's accomplishments and attractions passed over so lightly.

"Why, you know Lem Brown; he was lounging as usual, in Watty's shop, bragging, and quizzing the little barber. 'Come, Watty,' said he, 'I want to lose a V; can't you contrive some way to win it?' He then told the barber, that if he would sit upon a chair, and move his body from side to side, neither smiling nor speaking if spoken to, constantly repeating, 'Here I go, Watty barber—a dunce,' for half an hour, he should have the five dollars.

“First one customer, then another, dropped in, and the hubbub soon reached that part of the building where his family were, when all came rushing in, screaming ‘Watty! Mr. Watty! what is the matter? Speak to us! Surely he is demented; clean gone out of his mind!’

“The wife wrung her hands and tore her hair, and the neighbors added no small share of words and questions, which increased the confusion; but there sat Watty, as grave as a judge, with a perfect fool’s expression, moving from side to side, half singing or drawling, ‘Here I go, Watty barber—a dunce,’ until the thirty minutes were up, to a second, then, springing up, he resumed his natural shrewd countenance and position, claiming his money, and he got it, too. We all exercised our lungs quite freely, and I think it will be a good lesson to one, at least, of these inveterate braggadocio, who are always troubled with a surplus of funds.”

CHAPTER XI.

WALTER MARVIN possessed a very high opinion of his own abilities, if we would read his thoughts as he turned to the company, we should find them like this : —

“Well, Marvin, I think you’ll do. How opportune that story to put all thoughts of Miss Walton out of Robert’s head ! I could n’t think of giving him my opinion concerning that dainty parcel ; I mean to examine the bill of sale myself.”

These thoughts are an index to the character of the man ; though careless and unprincipled, he could talk and appear well, if disposed to forget his horses and champagne, both of which he delighted in. He often played the agreeable to the ladies in the most approved and flattering style, and he now improved every opportunity of becoming acquainted with Altha, which intimacy soon ripened into friendship and love. High were her hopes and light her heart contemplating her future prospects. The object of her fondest wishes was to find

one to love and trust, a strong arm to lean upon, a wise head to guide, with a heart full of sympathy to cheer and bless.

As she stood beside Marvin at the altar, so calm, so firm and statue-like, her soul whispered her hope,—its prayer for a happy peaceful life, believing all would end well. Once a deep gloom rested upon her features, with a momentary appeal that God would bestow upon her wisdom and strength to fulfil every duty of a wife. Strange anomaly, that a gentle, shrinking, trusting nature often conceals strong passions, as a soul fearless and unflinching in the hour of danger and adversity,—calm, faithful, enduring in the path of right.

Altha removed with her husband to a distant city, where he engaged in a lucrative business. Grand and beautiful scenery surrounded their elegant cottage upon the banks of the Hudson. Altha indeed felt, that no lovelier spot could have been selected for her, and her heart was full of happiness as her dwelling abounded in comforts and luxuries. “God is good,” she murmured, while a tear of adoration filled her eyes and glistened upon the long fringed lids. Then her thoughts

would rest upon her husband, who was, in truth, her greatest idol, so great was her confidence in him, (Altha knew very little of him,) she would forget his love might not always be to her "an abiding city," nor this world her home.

The city, as it proved, furnished too many attractions for a man of his unsteady habits. Too many jovial companions were hunting him up, which ended, not only in the neglect of his business, but the oft-repeated story of the vanishing of happy dreams of wedded life.

"Austin, where is Mr. Marvin to-day?" interrogated Mrs. M. of the clerk, going up to the desk, while waiting in the store to select some articles for herself.

The accountant hesitated, then replied somewhat abruptly, "He was in the bowling saloon an hour ago."

The hot blood mounted to Altha's cheek, then receded, leaving her pale as marble; rallying, she inquired pleasantly, "How do you get along in the store?"

Austin thought, "I may as well give her a hint of what is coming," and he told her of the dissatisfaction of the clerks, and that every thing was going wrong. Altha stood in deep thought, then continued, "I will do what I can to repair my husband's negligence. I can assist you with the books and papers, both here and

at the house, and you can devote more of your time to your fellow clerks, and perhaps, cheer them with your counsel and assistance." Austin regarded her with surprise. "I trust you will not refuse, because I have no right to ask you to do so, neither is it in my power to offer you more wages. I think I have not been mistaken in my judgment of your character, that you will do all in your power for your employer."

Austin bowed; "Excuse me, madam, if my silence appeared uncourteous. It strikes me you look rather delicate for the task you propose for yourself."

"O do not fear for me. 'Where there is a will, there's a way,'" she added, smiling, "I will come in to-morrow morning and look over what you have for me to do."

Austin stood looking after her as she passed out of the store.

"What a pity; I fear all her energy cannot save the concern. I have heard of woman's wit, but have not much faith to believe it will prevent affairs here going by the board."

With a sad air he resumed his pen, and began adding a column of figures upon the page before him. Austin was an excellent young man, and one well qualified for

his situation, to which he had arisen by his own persevering efforts, and now, instead of forgetting the dark hours of his early life, having overcome all obstacles, he was more sensitive and full of sympathy for the misfortunes of others. Marvin felt no little chagrin and annoyance when his wife entered upon her new duties as a clerk. He would much rather fail through her extravagance than his own neglect. However, her influence instilled new life into every one, which she continued to exert for three years. Her husband now more frequently than ever, extracted large sums of money from the drawer or desk, which made it impossible to meet payments. Mrs. Marvin applied to Marvin the elder, knowing her father-in-law could render assistance, as her husband often said, "in advance of the fortune for him in the perspective." The old gentleman replied:—

"MY DAUGHTER:—

"Sorrowfully I perused your letter, and though you endeavor to hide his faults with shame and confusion, I can see it is owing to his delinquencies that you are necessitated to ask for assistance. For your sake I enclose a check for fifteen hundred dollars; I would rather you would keep it for your own use; yet, if you choose to make one more effort to continue the business, you have my permission to use it as you will, and may God bless you.

"Yours with esteem,

M. M."

Duly the letter was received, and Mrs. M. wept tears of joy over it, and thanked Heaven that for the present she were spared from seeing her husband more openly disgraced, and she herself spared greater anxiety and trouble. And, as Austin approached the desk, she pressed the letter between her two hands, convulsively exclaiming, "Precious, precious news ; we are saved !" and waiting to see Austin enclose the money and direct it to one of their creditors, a firm in New York, lock it in the safe and put the key in his pocket, she returned home to enjoy a few hours rest and quiet. Marvin entered the store, as his wife passed out, and walking up to the clerk demanded the key, which Austin very reluctantly yielded to him. In a moment Austin thought of the money letter, and catching up his hat, walked to the desk with a view to get it, but Marvin already held it between his thumb and finger, examining it.

"Sir, I am going to the express office, and will take that letter."

"Not so fast," rejoined Marvin, with all the coolness imaginable. "I choose to examine it first."

Austin stood for a moment irresolute, eyeing his em-

ployer askance, not daring to say anything to arouse his suspicion, still pondering how to get the letter.

"It is high time the letter was there, and I am waiting for it."

"Well, go about your business, I will attend to the letter."

"Sir, you cannot have it, you have no right to take my letters, nor examine them, so hand over quick."

"How now, Impudence? Do you say truly that this letter belongs to you, and the contents concerning your own affairs?"

Austin was strongly tempted to tell an untruth, and thereby save his employer. Marvin observed him hesitate. "Ha! the fellow wo n't compromise his integrity. Feels too nice, too proud, to deceive," thought the man, inwardly pleased, while he regarded his clerk with a savage scowl.

"Mr. Marvin I wrote that letter and have some interest in its contents."

"Well, then I will hand it to the express-man, I am just going past the office;" and he chuckled with satisfaction as he strode independently forward, thrusting the letter into his hat as he walked.

An hour later Mrs. M. sought her chamber to deposit

her precious child, who was fast asleep in her arms, in its little rose-wood crib, so delicately draped with heavy lace curtains and rose-tinted spread; on returning from the store, instead of seeking her own rest, which she so much needed, she must soothe, caress and care for the wants of her little girl, and then look after the dinner, in order that everything should be prepared to suit the fastidious notions and appetite of her husband. She had deposited her lovely burden upon its snowy pillows, kissed the white lids, with their long fringes closing so gently, and the rosy pouting lips, and folded the dimpled hands, fairer than alabaster, over the delicate bosom; with the tiny shoulders peeping out, and lovingly shaded by the golden curls. Truly, the mother's heart might grow fond as she watched her cherub child. Turning around, she beheld her husband seated very coolly near the window, with an open letter in his hand, she walked slowly to his side, for with every opportunity she sought to speak pleasant words, hoping, in time, to win him to his own interests and right feelings.

A gleam of pleasure had lighted his heavy features, when his eye first fell upon his wife as she entered the room bringing in the child, with the thought that they

were all his own, which gave place to a different one, contradictory of pride, often terribly cruel and cutting to the gentle nature, who would have wished to look up to him as one capable of guiding. He noticed the caresses, "Pshaw! she loves the child better than me; 'tis for that she labors, not for me. Thank heaven I can take care of myself; I do n't need any help. If I had n't them to maintain, and this expensive establishment, I might do something; I wish I could get out of it. I am not to blame for her loving me, and she married me because she chose to, probably. I do n't see why she might not work as well as other women. This denying myself everything, to keep up this expensive living, 'tis awful, I can't stand it much longer."

The man forgot, entirely, that he had done nothing but spend all the profits of the store, for nearly three years, wearing his wife out with care and anxiety. Truly, he was an injured man, "it cost so much to keep his wife and child and house."

"Any news this morning?" she asked very cheerfully.

"No," was the gruff reply, and he shook off her hand which she had rested upon his arm, and pushed her back a step quite rudely.

Tears sprung to her eyes, and she forced them back. She had caught a glimpse of the open letter ; her heart misgave her, and she reached forward as though to take it. He sprung up and held it tantalizingly above her head.

“Do let me look at it ; you know I never troubled you before in this way.”

Unlucky expression !—if she had troubled him more and been more exacting, he would have valued her more highly. He was sick of the gentle, patient, enduring love. It seemed so simple, so foolish, he tried to faucey he had a right to be disgusted with it ; that he was disappointed in the piquant temper he thought he had won, who was to blame ?—whose cold, sneering words, whose cruel neglect and rude treatment, had crushed out the soul, tamed the once proud spirit. Altha, where now are your bright dreams of happiness, of truth, friendship, and love ? Where now the cherished thoughts ? Are their flowers all dead—their fires gone out ? Their smouldering ashes have indeed buried the soul,—a wreck of hopes and fear ; one attribute alone remains—to love. How the weary, fainting spirit would enliven and bloom again beneath the sun-

shine of reciprocal affection. He lowered the paper within her reach ; she caught it, and gave one look ; her heart died within her, for it was the identical letter in which she had enclosed the check, over which had been breathed so many anxious thoughts and hopeful, thankful prayers.

“Where is the money ?” gasped Altha, confronting her husband and pointing to the letter.

He returned her gaze with a daring, malicious smile, suddenly grasping her by the throat, “There ; take that for your meddling.”

The hot blood rushed to her brain, blinding and suffocating her ; the livid lips parted, and the delicate frame trembled and quivered with the stifling, pent-up agony. Poor, injured Altha ! she clasped her hands and raised them feebly towards her angry, passionate husband, lover, and friend, for whom, and for whose dear love she had given up friends, ease, quiet, happiness and enjoyment. The selfish and strong-hearted may speak harshly, and scorn the loving woman who bears meekly her cheerless lot, and exclaim, “She ought to have known better ; I could have told her, if she had listened to me, that he was not worthy of her.”

That simple act of Altha’s recalled him to himself,

or the sudden storm of fury had spent its force, for he loosened his fingers, half-buried in the white flesh, and she staggered forward and remained a long time supported by the low couch against which she had fallen ; darkness was all around her, even the lamp of reason had flickered and seemingly gone out. Marvin reached a chair and sat down, pale and faint with the obtruding fear of what he had done. Pride forbade him to render her any assistance, lest she should think he had relented his cruel act. Slow and painful was her awakening to consciousness, as wearily, fitfully the eddying life current again circled through its wonted channels. She raised her eyes, and there sat her husband, regarding her with a cold calculating look. A tear dropped from those long lashes, then another and another, which she brushed away until they could not, would not be controlled, and showered down, threatening to engulf the spirit in a flood of bitterness.

“Why do you weep? your tears make me mad,” sounded harshly on her ear, coming from the stoical being sitting in her presence. With an effort she arose, bathed the burning eyelids and laved the flushed and aching brow. Striving to be calm, and with an un-

steady step, she reached her husband's side, and kneeling with clasped hands raised imploringly ; her voice was hushed, but her eye, her attitude, was all a prayer, pleading for love and protection. He felt for a moment constrained to fold his arms around her, to rest her head upon his bosom, and promise to love and cherish her as he had never done. But his evil genius, which he had drank from his brandy flask, had not entirely left him ; enough remained to crush out each latent throb of manliness and humanity. He arose and walked coldly away.

Altha leaned her head upon the chair near her ; it seemed as if some rude hand had crushed her heart and soul, and rending them, had cast them away for ever.

"Altha," said her husband returning, "enough of this ; you know I hate such scenes. I did not hurt you, that you need make such ado. Let me tell you once for all, I will not bear it, and if you love me or ever did, you would do differently ; you would obey me. I want you to go away from here ; I too, am going. I care not where you go. I cannot support such extravagance. Leave me ; I can take care of myself, and wherever I go, remember you cannot come."

Altha remained petrified as the cruel language was uttered.

“Do you hear me?” continued he; “then speak. Will you obey me? Remember you are mine, and bound to do as I wish. Will you go?”

“No; O no!” and she sprung forward; “where could I go,—what could I do? I will not leave you, though you are unfeeling and cruel. You have no right to throw me upon the cold charity of a heartless world.”

“Ha, ha! but you shall go now, and hark ye, if you need assistance, perhaps Austin will write to your friends, and beg for help,” and thrusting his hands into his pockets, he walked carelessly from the room.

CHAPTER XII.

“Alas! O alas! for the trusting heart,
When its fairy dream is o’er,
When it learns that to trust is to be deceived,—
Finds the things most false where it most believed,—
Alas! for it dreams no more.”

SOME hours later Altha was aroused from her resting place upon the floor, where she had lain in a death-like swoon, since her husband left the room, by the voice of her darling child. Night had settled around them, and from the dark blue firmament, the young moon looked calmly down, tracing giant shadows with its pale sepulchral light.

Altha groped her way to the crib, lifted the little Mataka in her arms, nestled the tiny form close to her bosom, her arms folded tightly around it; but the fragile creature moved restlessly, and moaned as she lay. Mrs. Marvin placed her hand upon the full forehead; it was flushed and burning; the coral lips were parched and thirsty. The frightened mother, pressing

her child more closely, flew swiftly along the dark passages to the dining room, where the waning gaslight threw around its fitful glare. Preparing the simple remedies near at hand, then lighting her nurse-lamp, sat down to watch by the little sufferer, now soothing, now rocking it, then walking with it to and fro, through the long hours of that fearful night. The child's nurse was absent, and for many days the anxious mother watched beside her darling, and attended her with unceasing care, giving her every thought as freely as she would have given all of life, to mitigate its suffering, and who will say this affliction was not sent by an all-wise Parent, to save the reason and hope of that confiding soul, which had been so ruthlessly injured, its pure love thrown back to wither and die.

The mother kissed her convalescent babe, who, with cherub smiles, turned its arms around her neck, with the loving helplessness of babyhood.

Hark ! the tramp of men in the vestibule and heavy footsteps ascending the stairs startled Altha. She looked out upon the street below to ascertain the cause of the unusual disturbance, but started back, shame and con-

fusion mantling her cheek and brow, and tingling through every nerve.

What moved her thus? The red flag of the auctioneer waved from a window of the drawingroom, and soon the long-articulated, wavering sound of "going, going, gone," was borne upward, awakening in her heart echoes of departed comforts.

Mrs. Marvin turned pale as the crowd drew near, with rude jests, noisy tramp, and prolonged laughter, which seemed to mock the fallen fortunes of the "game of life." Here was the petty dealer in cast-off wares, jostling among the busy throng of economists, coveting the luxurious appurtenances around them. Her own room was thrown open and in rushed the little multitude, followed by the knight of the hammer and his attentive clerks.

Our heroine rose to repel the intruders, but sank back again reluctantly, on meeting their rude gaze.

"How much am I offered for this antique escritoir of the finest rosewood, inlaid with silver and pearl,—quite a gem. How much am I offered?—how much?"

Mrs. Marvin forgot her reluctance to encounter the rude stare of the bystanders, and sprung forward to

arrest the sale. Her voice trembled, yet her bearing was cold and energetic.

"Sir, can I not be spared this indignity ; why do you intrude within my private apartments?"

"Am sorry, madam, to disturb you. But the law must have its course."

"This escritoir was my mother's dying gift to me, and who, who would rob me of the cherished souvenir of my childhood," glancing around, in her excitement, hoping to read the sympathy she wished, — nearly every article in the room were the gifts of dear friends.

The man hesitated. "My orders were to take all. Why did you not secure these things?"

"The noise of your entrance is the first notice I have had of this misfortune."

"Ugh!" and the man drew a long, hard respiration between his teeth. "Have you no friend who will come to your assistance and bid in these articles? I might go over the other rooms and give you more time."

"No; none that I have a right to intrude upon, within hundreds of miles."

"Strange, strange. Madam, I can do but little. I am more and more surprised at every step. I had no

thought of finding such a splendid place, and most of all, a lady here."

The conversation was carried on in an under tone, which was here interrupted by a rough, impatient voice, fearful of losing "a bargain" upon the many artistic gems, and decorations of a ladies' boudoir. "Is this to be a sham sale? if not, go on, our time is precious."

"Lost to the feelings of humanity," thought Altha, as those harsh tones vibrated upon her ear, and she drooped meekly, as a lamb led to the slaughter, the faint rising hope dying away 'mid the chills of despair.

"Lady, I fear I must go on with this unpleasant duty," and he drew his hands across his eyes.

Altha snatched up her child, and folding her arms around it, fled from the room, to hide in some isolated corner, where she might remain undisturbed.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Alas ! the sun, whose dawning beam
Was full of hope and gladness,
Sends daily back, its parting gleam
On cloud, and storm, and sadness.”

MARVIN returned to his desolate home, to meet the sad, imploring gaze of his wife, no cheerful fire burned in the polished grate, the rooms cold and dreary, the bare walls and dusty, uncarpeted floors, met his eye at every step.

“Oh ! my husband, I am glad you have come, we have had no food, no fire, since yesterday morning, you will bring us some won't you ?”

“Where is the money ?” he asked gruffly, not wishing his wife to see how far his feelings were touched. “I can't do anything without means, you will know now what it is to want, pretty often, I expect.”

“No, do not say so; you have the ability to provide for us, and you will; and I will help you.”

“But I do not want your help, you will want it all yourself.”

“What do you mean?”

“Why, I am not going to provide for you with your spirited airs and extravagance. Come, get ready, and let’s be off.”

“Where will we go?”

“Where, why, to father’s of course, let him keep you if he has so much sympathy for you.”

“But, Walter, I did not complain to him; it was because I loved you so well, that I wanted to help you, when I knew how things were going.”

“Yes, yes. I understand, you know everything, doubtless you know enough to get rid of your husband entirely; I’ll not interfere; so get ready and let’s be off. Ha! love me, I do’nt want her to love me, the little fool, she’d let me take out her soul, and drink up her life, if ’twould make me happy. I’d rather have a virago who would put me over the road. I should make a better man if she would assert her rights, and forget love entirely. No, I do’nt mean that; God knows I could weep rivers of tears and blood, almost, if I could undo all the evil I have done. But she shall not see it, for she would conquer, and might rule me ever after.” And with this flattering unction, he

quieted and put back the better feelings of his heart, and turned away to prepare for his journey.

Without a tear, without a murmur, Altha viewed each cherished token which had fallen beneath the relentless hammer of law and justice, which swallowed all in the whirlpool of destruction. What poverty now, what disgrace could add to the one dark thought, like the "skeleton's tramp, tramp, going down to the dead," that her husband had forgotten both her and himself. Her eye lighted with a new gleam of sunshine, as her glance rested upon the forgotten escritoir, which the auctioneer, exercising his right for the occasion, had reserved for himself. When he had finished his exciting task, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, he sought Mrs. Marvin, and told her he had left it for her.

"How shall I thank you for this kindness to a stranger?"

"O, you need not mention it; I have a family of my own, and if you are ever able you may pay for it, if not, all right."

"I have nothing to repay you with now, and language seems but a feeble expression of my gratitude; may God in Heaven bless you and yours."

The man turned away with a heavenly light shining

from out those usually cold, grey eyes, and he murmured as he walked, "when I have nothing left to give, I should not wish to live any longer," and the angel of good fanned his hot brow, and whispered peace, peace, thou hast well done.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ There is strength
Deep bedded in our hearts, of which we seek
But little till the shafts of Heaven have pierced
Its fragile dwelling. Must not earth be rent
Before her gems are found ? ”

MRS. HEMANS.

THE golden sands in Time's crystal glass, had numbered days, weeks and months, while Altha seemed gaining fresh energy with every new incentive to exertion. She taught the “village school ;” made delicate garments for her friends, and translated foreign literature for the press. Still more than all else, she yearned for her husband's love and sympathy ; once gained, her proud, fearless spirit would on, on, laboring unceasingly to raise him even to the highest pinnacle of honor and distinction. Not so with Marvin, his was a pusillanimous nature, whom a breath of sarcasm, or a word of ridicule from an associate, could turn him from the noblest purpose. And while the wine flowed freely and sparkled in the tall glasses, he drained them deeper and deeper,

to still the small voice of his better self, which would cry out against the assassin of the soul.

“Why do’nt you send Walter to the gold regions?” said the friendly Doctor Hartwell to the elder Marvin, “much better than loafing around here, my boy would go any way.”

“Yes, I thought he came near going without your consent.”

“Just so; but I forgave him, he has such a roving disposition and I fitted him out at last; here comes your son. Ah! how do you do, my boy?” said he, addressing Walter. “I have just received a letter from my ’Tave, in California; the prospect is he’ll make money about as fast as he’s a mind to. Why don’t you start and try your fortune, you are a ‘chip of the old block’ here, and I presume you would do well. There’s a new steamer just ready to start, or will be on the twentieth. They want active business men out there, and you would do well.”

“My dear sir I would go, but have not the funds, and do not see any opening for me in these parts at present.”

“My son, as much as I regret such necessity, if you

wish to go, I will furnish the means, and trust you will do better."

A scowl flitted across Walter's brow as his father concluded, saying aside, "Always reminding me that I have not done well. I am provoked enough never to try again."

There now," exclaimed the light-hearted son of Æsculapius, who smiled at his own shrewdness, in managing to get Walter out of the way, to save his friend further disgrace; "get your traps ready, my son, and I'll bear you company to York, and see you safely stowed away in a snug berth, as I am going there to transact some business for my dear boy."

'O, when I am stricken, and my heart,
Like a bruised reed, is waiting to be broken,
How will its love for thee, as I depart,
Yearn for thine ear to drink its last deep token.'

"How I should have mourned and murmured to have buried my boy in his childhood, and he so promising then: he was all my pride, my greatest treasure; but now he has borne me down with care and sorrow, and my hair has bleached before its time." Thus soliloquised the elder Marvin, as he leaned upon his gold-headed cane, and looked sorrowfully from one of the

gothic windows of his brown cottage over the beautiful, tasteful grounds surrounding it. "But to send him away into a land of strangers, with no one to care for or watch over him in sickness or death, seems like consigning him to a living grave. Poor boy ! sometimes I almost fear I half-spoiled him by being over indulgent. Perhaps I was not sufficiently watchful and careful concerning his habits and disposition. God forgive me, but I was too proud of the boy, and thought I would not be too severe with his little faults, and that all would come right."

* * * * *

"Altha, I tell you you cannot go."

"Say not so, my husband. I cannot endure that you should go alone. Who knows but I might prove the bright star of your destiny. Do unsay that cruel sentence."

"No ; what could I do with you there ? so dry your eyes and go to bed ; you need not sit up for me ; I am going to the hotel to meet some of my old chums, and may not be home to-night."

She intercepted him as he proceeded to the door, and standing partly against it, made one last appeal, saying "Will you not let me go ? O, do not leave me and go

alone; for if you suffer, I would be near to cheer and assist you. Let me go, that I may teach our child to revere and bless her father." She had laid her hand lightly upon his arm in the earnestness of her pleading, but he shook it off, and, moving her from the door, strode on, looking back to say,

"Once for all, I tell you that you cannot go. Still," he continued, though speaking to himself, "I shall feel disappointed if she does not go, but I wish she would not ask me, for it arouses me to torment her. I believe the fiends possess me to thwart her, but she loves me so wildly, so devotedly, I wonder she don't hate me; no fear of that; I wish she would, for a change."

Mrs. Marvin, on entering her daughter's room some hours afterwards, found her heart-sick and despairing, — no gleam of hope lighted up the dark future; the fires of confidence and faith in aught of earth seemed to have died out. She was looking upon life with the chilling apathy of despair; but Altha knew not herself, knew not her own heart. She was at last constrained to admit the equity of her mother's counsel, and say no more to her husband about accompanying him, but cheerfully prepared everything for his comfort. She

brought forth her little purse, and added it to his, even to the last dollar of her own earnings.

A family group was gathered in the hall to speak the farewell word; but as Walter Marvin glanced around upon each familiar face and form, his heart sank within him, and he felt the cool indifference and stoical expression, which he had assumed, would leave him at this trying moment. Altha saw the glance of fear and pain, and, comprehending his feelings, sprang forward, taking the long cashmere scarf from her neck, threw it over his shoulders, and hanging her own heavy shawl on his arm, cautioned him to be careful, pointing to their child, then putting up that pretty, loving mouth, gave him a parting kiss, which he returned; when coldly bowing to the remainder of the group and waving his hand for an adieu, rushed from the hall, down the steps, and, springing into the coach, the door closed with a sharp clang; crack went the whip, and away whirled our adventurer, without casting one look behind.

CHAPTER XV.

“Within her heart was his image,
Clothed in the beauty of love and youth, as she last beheld him,
Only more beautiful made by his death-like silence and absence.”

LONGFELLOW.

“PERHAPS, my friend, it is as you say ; my wild impassioned love for him has proved a curse ; yet I will not strive to sever the chain that has bound me ; I will not break my wedded vows, for they were voluntarily spoken. You need not grieve for me ; ‘the heart may bleed, and bleed, and brokenly live on.’”

“O, Altha, think of our long friendship, and take my advice. Think of your beauty, your talents ; think of the elevated position you might fill in society ; think of your child—the lovely Mataka,—and forget *him*. Let the law (a very convenient mentor in such cases) absolve your vows, and fancied duties.”

“No, Laura ; highly as I value your friendship, vain and futile your efforts to turn me from my purpose. As well might you, with your delicate arm, attempt to

hurl from their firm foundations the granite boulders which crown the hoary summit of Mount Washington, we admired so much while standing beneath their giant shadows last autumn."

"O, Altha, do be persuaded to give up your, I must say it, foolish faith, and prepare to go to Washington with us. Ah! here comes the postman with a letter."

Altha arose to receive it. It was postmarked "California," and the superscription was in a strange hand. Nervously she tore open the envelope, and hastily run over the contents:—

"SACRAMENTO, — — —."

"MADAM: —"

"At the request of Mr. Marvin I write to inform you that he is ill, and cannot recover except with the most watchful care and attention. He has suffered much already, and is likewise destitute of funds and friends. — — —."

Altha dropped the letter, a film gathered before her eyes; the life-blood seemed chained, stagnant, turned to stone. Laura snatched up the letter, then threw it away in disgust, exclaiming, "I had hoped it was all over with *him*; but no such good fortune. He seems bound to live," and she set about restoring her friend to consciousness

CHAPTER XVI.

“Angels from friendship gather half their joy.”

ALTHA'S early friend, the splendid and accomplished Laura Lord, now the wife of Arthur Vale, was reclining half-buried in the damask velvet cushions of her luxurious couch, her 'broidered handkerchief crumpled and tear-stained, indulging in the unfashionable luxury of a good cry ; she heeded not the entrance of her kind-hearted husband, who bent over her with a look and tone of endearment.

“What, dearest, are you still grieving for the wayward Altha ? I saw the steamer gliding proudly o'er the sparkling, foaming water, bearing on ocean's treacherous bosom our treasures.”

“O, I can but weep to lose her ; and it does seem like insanity or tempting Providence, for her to dare the horrors of sea and greater horrors of land, and brave fortune among strangers and savages.”

“Do not grieve for her ; she thought she was doing her duty.”

"But I am out of all patience with such devoted, self-sacrificing wives."

"If there were more of them, dearest, they would redeem the world."

"Fie upon you ; say rather, if there were more such romantic women, your sex would become all tyrants, and ours all fools."

'Squire Vale laughed, "Marriage, you know, is a lottery, and those who win the prizes are the least capable of appreciating them."

"Well, well, Arthur ; I had hoped Altha would have been cured by this time of her *penchant* for her worthless husband, and that we should have had her one of our party this winter."

The light-hearted husband hummed the fashionable opera air "'Tis better to laugh than be sighing," adding, "So please don this satin embroidered drapery, which you call a cloak, and this tiara of gems, and let us away to learn one lesson of life, and the charms of '*la belle passion*,' from the thrilling drama of to-night ; the audience will be the ton, the scenes are new, and the music, it is said, divine. Then, 'away dull care' ;

a truce to sorrow with him who goes to show a beautiful wife."

"All things have a begining and an end, and I must shut my ears and heart to the counsel of dear friends and pursue the path of duty, and trust a heavenly wisdom, which, oft 'behind a frowning Providence, hides a smiling face,'" mused Altha, as the steamer bore her swiftly over the darkling water.

Thus ends the manuscript.

"Well, Ethan," said Halvor, at their next meeting, "What has this long story to do with your gold-digging and subsequent return to this city? I might fancy that you met this Mrs. Marvin—quite a paragon of perfection, and out of respect to her, married some of her numerous acquaintances."

"Ha, ha! I'll not let you off so easily, since you have enlisted to follow the woof of my adventures, I intend to keep you traversing the labyrinthian walks of dull and tiresome detail."

"Ah, Ethan! I see you have not forgotten that I used to vote every one a bore who made long prosy speeches; but proceed; I am all attention."

"Purchasing a Mexican pony, I started for the city

of Sacramento, resolved to court fickle dame Fortune in that vicinity as preferable to 'the diggins.' But I found myself incapable of any great exertion, from the effects of an intermittent fever and occasional chills, in consequence of exposure to all kinds of weather, and sleeping upon the ground in our numerous journeyings and scoutings across the country. Accommodations were none of the best: the rude dwellings we were forced to occupy were crammed almost to suffocation with human beings, who left me to suffer alone during the day, and at night, wrapped in my blanket, had to contend for my right to a place on the rough and dusty floor of the domicile, along with some thirty others.

"Don't laugh at the agreeable picture, Halvor: like Esau of old, I would have 'sold my birthright' for a glass of pure cold water, a luxury then not to be thought of. Soon the great fire broke out, which laid nearly the whole city in ashes. A conflagration in a great city is frightful—terrible; but there, where shelter and comforts were so scarce, it was doubly trying.

"The fire broke out so suddenly in the night, and spread so rapidly, that I had barely time to escape with

life. I saved from my stock of valuables only one pair of duck pants and one flannel shirt. Casting a look among the many groups, who, like myself, were watching the devouring element rioting upon the spoils, leaving thousands shelterless and half-clad, I noticed a rude couch, covered with canvass which supported an invalid gentleman, and beside him a fine, though careworn looking woman, in vain endeavoring to shelter him from the sweeping currents of air; one arm encircled a little girl some five years of age, who clung to her, almost convulsed with fear. Accident and misfortune readily make acquaintance, and, at that time, fashionable conventionalities had not been imported, and ceremonious punctilios could very well be dispensed with.

“Acting upon the impulse of the moment, I stepped forward and addressed the lady, ‘This is a sorry place for an invalid.’

“She turned toward me with a look as frank and free as though she had known me all her life. ‘It is, indeed sir, and I know not where to find the poorest shelter.’

“I conjectured she was from ‘the States;’ evidently a lady, and tacitly installed myself their guardian *pro*

tem. A lady from home, in that wilderness world, was a *rara avis*; for the confusion and jargon at the Tower of Babel, could not have been even a priming to that around us. I found two men who were stopping to breathe, having exhausted themselves contending with the fire-demon, inch by inch, the ground and property. They assisted me to remove the rude couch some hundred yards beyond range of the fire, where we remained sheltered by the walls of a rude board and mud house, hemmed in by the crowd of houseless beings until morning. For an exorbitant price, we obtained permission next day to occupy a small portion of a very small room. From Mrs. Marvin, (for by that name she introduced her husband to me,) I learned that she had left the States, with one thousand dollars in her purse, to attend upon her husband, who was suffering from a protracted illness, from which I saw no chance for him to recover.

“The prices we had to pay for everything pertaining to comfort, even for a cup of water, bid fair to exhaust the remainder of her funds as well as mine, and aroused us to discuss, very often, the important theme, what was she to do. For several days I went ‘house-hunting,’ hoping to obtain more comfortable quarters, and

judge my surprise, when one day, upon returning to report progress, I found standing near Marvin and bending over him, a person robed as a monk or priest. For nearly all of that class I had met there, wore pretty much the same costume. His ugly cowl hid his features, as the loose cassock tied around the waist with a hempen cord, hid his form. I drew back having no great regard for this papistical sect. Mrs. Marvin had observed me, and motioned me to come forward; I did so. Her smile at the moment was so pleasant and inviting, I quite forgot my feelings of reluctance to come in contact with the priest. He was conversing with the invalid; the tones of his voice were so clear, so musical, and he spoke in such an honest manner, that I began to listen with pleasure, not unmixed with curiosity. He seemed to understand all the discomforts of our situation without a word or glance. I subsequently learned he was familiar with such scenes.

“‘My daughter,’ said he, addressing Mrs. Marvin, ‘you require better accommodations for your husband and child.’

“I now proceeded to inform them that I had found a room somewhat better than their present abode, which

they might take immediately. The monk bowed, then continued :

“My daughter, I have a rancho some distance from here, where you can have quiet, which is needful, both for your husband and yourself. With your permission I will send a conveyance for your family to-morrow.’

“While Mrs. Marvin was expressing her thanks, I was wishing that I might take the liberty of excusing them from accepting his charity, although I knew how much they stood in need of any assistance that would be offered them. I could form no opinion of him, for his head-gear shaded all of his countenance except the eyes, his long white beard which fell heavily upon his breast, and a few straggling locks of bluish white hair. At last he accosted me ; ‘My son, you will accompany them if you please ; you will be welcome.’ I bowed in token of acquiescence, not liking over much the idea of this friendship, and not wishing to leave the party. Raising his folded hands as though giving us his blessing, he passed on his way, leaning on his strong oaken staff. My thoughts went out after him in no very charitable manner ; the wily Priest, thought I, surely has some design in this, or why should he select our party from out the throng of sufferers the

late disastrous conflagration has utterly ruined, and those of his own church too. My sainted father, 'honor to his memory,' would call it one of the 'leadings of Providence.' The invalid turned aside as though he would rest. I glanced at Mrs. Marvin, who seemed to interpret my thoughts, 'certainly, my friend, we need fear no temporary harm, nor apprehend anything serious for the future; his is simply a mission of charity.'

"'I hope, madam, your affirmation will prove correct; I see, like many of your sex, you are trusting, and unsuspecting accordingly; much as I dislike to be indebted to this man, or monk, I will make one of your 'retainers' for the present.'

"'Thank you! thank you! O, how can we ever repay you for all you have done for us. I am indeed very, very grateful. May God bless and reward you.'

"Our preparations for removal were speedily made; yet, how were we going? The priest had said he would send for us. I was restless and uneasy, for it seemed like making a leap in the dark, and made many vague speculations as to the result. At an early hour next morning, I took up my station outside the rude dwelling with my hands in my pockets and broad *sombrero* pressed

hard over my eyes, gloomily intent upon watching the scene around me. All was confusion, a perfect chaos. Cattle of every description were wearily moving along, singly and in pairs and dozens fastened together, loaded with timber, stone, sand and every procurable material for building. Worn and jaded mules and pack-horses loaded with provisions and comforts, for such as could procure them. Workmen, with loud voices and ceaseless jargon, were planning, framing and putting up new buildings over the blackened fragments and dying embers of the former ones. Busy laborers, interspersed with groups of half-clad sufferers, wading through mud and *debris*, thirsting for a cup of water, or famishing for bread, presented an exciting picture, which cannot be easily imagined or described.

“The clang of the hammer, the crash of falling timber, mingled with the ceaseless clamor of unknown tongues, presented a stirring picture to our friend Ethan, who declared the confusion at the Tower of Babel would not have been a circumstance to it.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Hast thou not known
The priceless value of a real friend?
If thou hast such, if thou hast a true friend,
Who is all worthy of thy confidence
In whom thou canst impose implicit trust,
Use such a one with all due gentleness.”

“HALVOR you know we made up our minds never to be surprised at anything; but I was a trifle startled as a dark, ferocious looking Mexican, mounted on a black horse drew rein opposite me, leading a splendid Jennet, light of foot and fleet as an antelope, splendidly caparisoned. The bridle was richly studded with silver and gold, and the blanket thrown over it, was elaborately wrought, by the hand of some high-bred Spanish maiden, with gay colors, of birds and flowers, and strange devices, interspersed with stars and crosses of gold. A net of solid silver wire ornamented its head and ears, which was also of Mexican workmanship. A short distance in the rear was another horseman, mounted like the first, carrying a cushion in front of

him, and leading a more powerful charger, having a simple bridle and blanket of untanned hide ; next followed several mules and half-savage looking men, as runners, carrying between them a large willow basket, shaped like a cradle, and constructed with two strong handles upon each side.

“ The splendid Jennet was allotted to Mrs. Marvin, with the swarthy Spanish attendant, the charger for myself, and the robber-looking man with the cushion, appropriated little Mataka to himself ; while the sick man was gently removed to the willow cradle, well furnished with cushions and blankets, and a screen was raised over him, forming quite a novel, though comfortable conveyance for an invalid. Our little cavalcade set forward, greatly surprised at the novelty of our situation and the comfortable provisions for our journey. Our ride was through a romantic and charming country. The scenery was constantly changing from the lovely and beautiful, to the grand and sublime ; now passing rolling undulations covered with forest trees, shrubs and vines ; now riding leisurely over beautiful plains covered with grass and a thousand varieties of sparkling flowers. We stopped to rest occasionally, and partake of some refreshment which had been provided,

consisting of dried beef, preserves and wine, cold water and fruit being offered us at many rancho's at which we halted, (procured by some mysterious influence of our guide.)

“Afar to the west, shrouded in gorgeous golden drapery, the sun was fast sinking to his accustomed rest, below the dark belt of the distant horizon; while bird and insect had commenced their evening songs of worship, warning the weary traveller homeward to find shelter from the gathering dew. For miles in front and around us, was spread out the beautiful rannos, where herds of cattle and horses were grazing; but yet, no signs of human habitation. We approached a slight elevation covered with forest trees of sycamore and linden, mingled with the never ending red-wood and stunted oak, interspersed with dark grey rocks and luxuriant flowing vines. O, how we longed for the end of our ride; as we wound around the brow of the hill, I was just getting together my little stock of Spanish to question our guides, when, as if from instinct, our horses halted, and we were dismounted upon a beaten path beneath the trees; following our guide, the way was soon intercepted by a tangled hedge-row, impenetrable it seemed, as a Mexican *chapparel*. Luxuriant

masses of grape vines, pride of the prairie, and honeysuckle, hung over the hedge. Our fatigue was forgotten; our weary eyes opened wide with wonder and curiosity, as Mrs. Marvin's attendant lifted and put back a curtain of vines, and we passed through upon the other side. We passed through gardens of choice fruits and flowers, seemingly of all that grew in Eden, spread out around us, our way often interrupted by the jangled hedge of willow or evergreen, when the magic of our guide unveiled the way by raising one of the primitive fragrant curtains. Surely we had entered paradise, and stealthily we looked at one another to assure ourselves we were all there. Had I been alone how welcome any such adventure would have been to me. I would gladly have braved all danger to explore the mysteries of this mysterious enclosure; but with an invalid, a child, and a lady for companions, I began to be filled with fear and apprehension. 'This must be a hermit's habitation,' exclaimed Mrs. Marvin, at last. See, the last vine curtain has dropped and we are in the monk's home; it consists of one room formed of saplins of oak and hemlock firmly woven together and covered with clay, the roof is formed the same as the sides and covered with tile, there was a ground floor

having an occasional grey flag-stone interspersed, with here and there a tiny blade of grass or flower peeping up from the sides of the stones; a few stone seats and a rustic bench, formed of the twisted saplins, furnished the room, with the exception of a large stone pitcher in one corner, filled with cold water, having a stone drinking-cup beside it.

“‘Our friendly friar,’ continued Mrs. Marvin, ‘must be very devoted in his religion to live in this pastoral style.’

“‘Ah!’ I rejoined, laughing slyly, “we come for quiet; shall we not expire of *ennui*? Can we endure such everlasting quiet?’ She smiled as I glanced around, and inquired what we were to do next. The wall or partition of the room rolled back a little way, and the monk stood before us, and welcomed us to his humble habitation. The *vaqueros*, (or servants,) hastened forward with the invalid, and the man with the sleeping child in his arms, followed by Mrs. Marvin and myself. The wall moved back to its place, shutting out to the unwelcome or chance visitor, all knowledge of any other rooms beyond that one. A separate room was allotted to each of our party, and, taking possession of mine, I sat down to ruminate. I resolved not to sleep but watch, to see what I could find out, for it was not my principle to

stay in a place long until I'd find some way to get out of it. Why were our attendants so silent during our journey. Why was the house so curiously contrived? Why were the grounds a perfect labyrinth, defying the most curious? Why were we shut out from the world? What would be our fate? In vain I tormented myself with similar questions. I pushed aside the vine-leaves that shaded the lattice and looked out. My vision was bounded by those same mysterious hedges, and the pure azure above me. I listened; I heard a horse pass swiftly along, as though upon a beaten track, then another and another, at short intervals; what could it mean? 'Ha! I have it,' I exclaimed, half aloud, 'this is the bandit's home, and the robber chief is the Priest in disguise.' I examined my pistols and placed them where I could lay a hand on them quicker than thought; then stretched myself upon the inviting couch. It was not an iron-barred, hair-cloth covered one, said to have been in fashion among zealous catholics, but a right eastern luxury, piled with cushions and blankets, and draped with cambric and linen. I must have slept soundly, for I was awakened by the twitter of the early birds, I sprang up and hastily completed my toilet, and walked out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ALL nature was robed in her most becoming apparel; the dew was sparkling upon every leaf and flower, tinted, gemmed and gilded by the glorious radiance of the rising sun. Bright birds upon tree, and hedge-row, and every drooping sprig, were carolling their matin song to the Creator. I stood lost in the enjoyment and admiration of this beautiful outer world, all breathing, smiling, happy.

“‘Only man, in the plan, shrinks from his part,’ was spoken in elegant Spanish, by a manly voice; turning I saw standing near me, as though reading my thoughts, Mrs. Marvin’s attendant of yesterday; few traces of the ferocious looking Mexican were visible. He bowed and went on his way. At that moment a gong sounded far and wide upon the still morning air, and from bush and tree, rock and hollow, a hundred forms started to life. They laved their hands in the crystal water, flowing from a rude stone trough, then entered a large building composed of unbaked bricks and covered with

tiles, and shaded by cotton-wood trees. This was a chapel, where each man, woman and child knelt and went through the ceremony of prayer. I watched and wondered, as one by one they passed out.

“‘My son,’ I looked up, the monk stood beside me, ‘let us go,’ said he. We visited the invalid; the monk spoke a few soothing words to him, administered a composing draught, as naturally as though he had been bred to the office of nurse, then led the way to the breakfast room, where we enjoyed a fragrant cup of coffee. We were joined by Mrs. Marvin and a beautiful Spanish lady, all ease, grace and dignity; she was brilliantly beautiful, reminding me of a painting by the old masters, a perfect, glorious looking woman.

“‘Senorita Isabella Venicia,’ said the monk, taking the stranger lady by the hand and presenting her. We bowed after the fashion of Yankees. Mrs. Marvin, as she came forward, poured forth her thanks to him, for his great kindness to herself and family, and I was about to add something for politeness sake, when father Anselmo waved his hand and dismissed the subject, and we finished our meal nearly in silence.

“‘Have you recovered from the fatigue of yesterday?’ said I to Mrs. Marvin.

“‘Yes, partially. Methinks, ’Squire Eldridge, you are early.’

“‘Yes; I could scarcely rest last night, I was so impatient to explore paradise, as you call it.’

“‘How do you like it this morning?’

“‘O! better and better. But have you observed the luxuries strewn around our rooms? Every thing I touch, and every thing I see, awakens a curiosity to know more of our host. What do you think of him now, Mrs. Marvin; nothing ill of course?’

“‘He is, no doubt, opulent, educated, and a gentleman; there is something about him, a word, or a gesture it may be, that reminds me of some friend I have known.’

“‘Have you no doubts or fears of him?’

“‘None,’ she answered smiling.

“‘But I cannot say the same. Perhaps it is because I am better acquainted with human nature, that I trust less than you do.’”

“‘She continued, ‘last evening, after we were shown to our rooms, and I had attended to the comfort of my husband and child, it was quite late when I prepared to take some rest, my strength completely exhausted, and

wearied with the fatigues of the day, I had scarcely power to move, when suddenly I was aroused from a torpor stealing over my senses, by thoughts of the novelty of our situation, and tormented myself with nameless doubts and fears, as I sat listening to the evening breeze whispering among the leaves that shaded the lattice, and cast merry, dancing shadows upon the moonlit floor ; then I felt a presence near me, an ethereal influence, which seemed to say, ‘fear not ; I am thy guide ; I am thy shepherd. Remember “not a sparrow falleth to the ground without its Maker’s notice.” “Are you not worth more than many sparrows ?” Then I felt ashamed of my uncharitable thoughts, and knelt and prayed, and felt as though I had heard it spoken, “O ye of little faith.” There is one who doeth all things well.’”

“‘I wish I had your faith, but I never can.’

“‘Do not say that, my friend,” said she glancing at me cheerfully ; “only ask for it and it will come to you. But I must go and see if my husband is awake.’

“I now began an examination of the room. It was furnished in a style similar to the others. There were lounges, tables, flower-stands, *feanteau*, and ottomans

together with every imaginable article for comfort, which were composed of knotty, distorted, and twisted timbers of the oak and redwood, some in its natural state, with the bark left on it, yet varnished and gilded, and looking very graceful and beautiful. But this was not all: there were luxurious cushions heaped upon the floor of embroidered velvet and merino, window draperies of linen and silk, shells, books and flowers, stone and alabaster pitchers and vases, tipped and ornamented with silver, also rare paintings and gems of art lying in every direction. Stone and silver fountains of pure sparkling water were in many of the rooms, having drinking-cups of silver and gold attached to them by a chain of the same metal. Tiny fountains of rose-water and silver cups of frankincense sent forth their odoriferous perfume at every step. In vain I conjectured how did they get into this uncivilized land, and who planned this fairy grot? Out of doors I hoped to be more successful in solving these questions. The main building seemed to have been built of one room at first, one story in height, (a copy after South American dwellings, which are formed one story in height, for fear of the tornado, or earthquake,) and to

this room had been added wing after wing, and pile upon pile, some of the rooms having balconies running around them; then there would be several grouped together, presenting a singular and grotesque appearance. A hundred yards from the dwelling we occupied, I found a number of huts and tents, occupied by the retainers, laborers and *vaqueros* belonging to the ranch; and turn which way I would, I found one of these tents or huts. Some of them resembling pretty little cottages, half concealed by the luxuriant shrubbery, with a small yard of magnificent plants under cultivation of the females of the cot. Some of these tasteful dwellings were supplied with a small fountain of cool spring water, bubbling up to irrigate their gardens and purify the atmosphere. These little dwellings seemed like sentry-posts, and the inmates all spies; but I judged them differently upon longer acquaintance. Splendid horses, mules, deer, Mexican dogs, and sheep; foreign and native fowls, with thousands of gay-plumaged birds filled the copse and covered the plains far as the eye could reach. There were numbers of men, women and children, some at work, some lying idly and listlessly about, either in the rank grass or sleeping upon the sunny side of a

hedge. Many nations were represented. There was the native from the mountains, but little removed from the savage; the dark and haughty Spaniard; the ruddy-cheeked beef-eater — for I heard his authoritative tone exclaiming ‘These are not fine hedges; you should go to England to see fine hedges. No other nation knows anything about fine *hedges*.’ ‘Arra, an’ begorra ye’ll be the death o’ me entirely,’ came from the light-hearted Hibernian; while ‘Yah, yah!’ sounded like a clap-trap from one of Afric’s shiny-skinned sons, laughing at the jargon of the Yong Chong stepping oddly about. How or where our host gathered together such a motly tribe, and how he managed to keep them was beyond my comprehension.

“I sought my own quarters to inspect them more particularly. The suit of rooms appropriated to my use were furnished with the rustic furniture I have already described, which was ornamented with quaint devices of gold and silver and gay-colored landscapes. Certainly it seemed as though every kingdom of the world had been ransacked to furnish the creature-comforts and rare gems of art my eyes rested upon. I was occasionally ashamed of my suspicions; everything seemed

so peaceful, so beautiful, even the cool scented breeze rustled among the vine-leaves and lifted the window drapery, fanning me with its rich breath and lulling me to forget the world with all its cares and all its pleasures.

CHAPTER XIX.

“His home was known to all the vagrant train ;
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain.”
GOLDSMITH.

“My friend, you have been exploring the grounds, I presume.”

“Yes, my dear Mrs. Marvin ; at least I have been trying to do so.”

“What is your opinion concerning the place ?”

“I scarcely dare tell you ?”

“Why do you think me so weak, that I cannot bear unpleasant news ?”

“But it would not relieve your mind.”

“Perhaps not ; but it will satisfy my curiosity, which is worth something.”

“Well, there is, as we remarked upon our arrival, a mystery connected with everything. Evidently we are enjoying the comforts of the bandit’s home, or guests of one of the myrmidons of the Pope.”

"I agree with you in thinking that many of the people here are Catholics, for I heard the Ave Marias chanted during the night-watches, and at intervals, while sitting beside my husband, until near morning."

"Did you not feel angry with them?"

"O no; I pittied them, because they had not learned to approach the Author of all Light and Good, and present their petitions in a more heart-cheering and strengthening manner, and while they chanted, I felt my own need of gratitude for numberless favors."

Occasionally I sat beside Marvin while his wife endeavored to take a little rest; often, while doing so, drawing comparisons of her amiability and devotedness to her family; and then I would grow restless and impatient concerning my own inactivity. However, I allowed myself a great deal of credit for looking after strangers, just because they were unfortunate, and generally ended by detracting a tithe of credit from the priest, doubting his disinterestedness towards them. Mrs. Marvin growing sadder and sadder every day, as Father Anselmo, who was also physician in some degree, gave his opinion that her husband could not hold out much longer. At times, when he slept; with hushed

voice and "soundless tread," we gathered around his bed listening breathlessly to assure ourselves the weary spirit had not flown from earth. At other times we listened to the eloquent lessons of heavenly faith, consolation and soul-stirring prayers of the priest, poured forth for the dying man. At such times he spake only the religion of the heart, and faith in God, and no one who heard him would have supposed him a professor of popish sentiments.

The sick man would listen apparently for a time, then turn away, shutting his eyes as though communing with his own thoughts, or trying to sleep. I learned to appreciate that loving wife. She was indeed a priceless treasure; and I lamented that heaven had not made such a one for me. No watching, no fatigue, no labor, no extra patience and gentleness, seemed ever to be thought of by her compared with his comfort. No weariness, languor, or want of exercise could induce her to leave his side except for a few moments, and then, at the instance of the priest, whom she tacitly obeyed, whether from reverence or gratitude, or that he understood her better than others, I could not determine. Daily I visited the interior of the chapel, to admire the

rare paintings which adorned it. On several occasions I caught glimpses of white drapery leaving the organ, or gliding near the altar, which I supposed belonged to the Spanish lady I had met at table.

For hours I watched the laborers upon the rancho, to discover, if possible, if the Priest was truly the main-spring which regulated and kept in order all these people. Some of them would follow him, calling him "good Father Anselmo," taking hold of his robe; praying for blessings upon him, and asking for blessings upon themselves; in short, he seemed to be their divinity.

Standing outside the chapel, I noticed father Anselmo passing toward the house by way of a private entrance, his head bent forward, and his hands dropping listlessly by his side, as though somewhat dejected. I ventured to accost him: "Father Anselmo."

"My son."

"Allow me to ask you one question?"

"Certainly; as many as you please."

"I wish to ask, what signifies the sign of the cross."

"It signifies the incarnation and death of our

Saviour. But the illiterate make the sign to keep away evil spirits."

"I may not answer, there is no truth in your assertion; in their ignorant blindness, they gain many imperfect ideas, and it is a great work to make them truly comprehend the things which belong to their salvation."

"My son, do you make inquiries to learn the way of immortal life, or to criticise and play the spy?"

"The spy! What do you mean, sir? Did you not invite me hither?"

"Yes; I wronged you, I know you better. My son," he continued, "we were speaking of the 'sign of the cross.' It signifies two principle mysteries; the Unity and Trinity of God, the Incarnation and death of our Saviour. When we put our right hand to our head, saying 'in the name,' we signify Unity. When we make the sign of the cross, saying 'of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' we signify Trinity."

"Allow me to say, sir, there is so much mystery and superstition mixed up in your religion, (I beg pardon, sir,) in the Catholic religion, I cannot make it agree with the passage, 'He that runs may read.'"

"My son, you will doubtless find many things to con-

demn ; but, I am at your service, and shall be happy to talk with you often as you wish."

"But, sir," said I, (I had adopted the title of Father Anselmo, because others did, for politeness sake ; but now the words would stick in my throat.) "I shall probably give you a few of my honest opinions, and, at the same time, Sir Priest, you will find me quite a heathen, as regards the creed and ceremonies of your church."

"Your integrity and singleness of purpose, I think will serve my purpose best."

"Indeed. I have heard that persons capable of intrigue and deep design, are chosen for the Pope's work."

"You misunderstand me," said he, his forehead flushing and drawing himself proudly up, "but no matter" said he, now resuming the conversation with his usual quiet tone. "I fear you have met with those pretending to be Catholics, who have given you wrong and unpleasant ideas concerning them."

"I have met with those, with whom I have thought it a part of their religion to deceive, even to telling an open and direct falsehood ; yet, these same persons attended mass and the confessional, repeated prayers

and did penance upon occasion, calling all honest folks heretics."

"My son, perhaps you are a trifle excited toward them. However, I will take your words for what they are worth. They shall not hurt you. You do not understand them."

"Yet how can I understand them, if I may not believe my own observations."

"But, my son, you will not be allowed to trust your own judgment; you must accept everything, believe everything, taught by the church."

We walked on in silence, and turning toward the house, my companion entered without another word. "Ah! the wily Priest," I mused, "Perhaps he thinks he has said enough for once. Yet, after all, I would like to become acquainted with him, there is such an air of mystery about him; then he is such a scholar, so refined, so gentlemanly, and charitable withal. No wonder, he colors when I speak honest sentiments or scandal in such a *brusque* manner, no doubt they jar upon his sensitive nature.

CHAPTER XX.

“ And Lara sleeps not where his fathers sleep ;
But where he died, his grave was dug as deep ! ”

BYRON.

I HASTENED to the invalid's apartment, to assist Mrs. Marvin. The angel of Death had passed by. Her husband was going a journey to a far country. He felt the messenger's icy breath, and shivered. We heard not the language of the spirit, but we traced a ghastly smile flickering around the lips of the dying. Who can witness, unmoved, the death damps gathering upon the brow of the doomed one ; the keen anguish at parting ; the last great struggle for the fleeting breath. Oh ! we would wish our friends to fall gently ‘ asleep in Jesus.’ We stood silently around the couch, hushed our very breathing that we might watch, nor disturb the weary one. Oh ! who has not lost a friend ? Who has not some loved one in that land beyond the grave ? The stricken one is kneeling beside the dying, in heart-breaking agony. The last wild kiss unheeded ;—the

last fervent, hopeless, despairing, embrace unanswered. Cold, and chill the form of the inanimate sleeper, so dearly loved ; gone, gone, while we are left to mourn.

“Let us pray,” came from the lips of the priest, and there, as one of earth’s angels, he poured forth a fervent supplication for the bereaved one, until the fountain of tears was broken, and overflowed the bitter sorrow. We laid him down in his narrow bed beside the chapel, where drooped the willow, and beneath which the green turf was gemmed by the tiny star-flower of innocence. No funeral pomp, no senseless grandeur disturbed the tranquil sleeper ; no stately candles burned with ghastly light within the darkened room, gloomy with pall and shroud, and shadowy drapery. Wrapped in his mantle, he sleeps beneath the green turf in the golden beautiful valley of ———. Often, at twilight we wandered near the quiet spot, hallowed by holy thoughts and grief-laden sighs, and watered with many a tear, and thought to commune with the spirit of our friend, who had explored the convex river of life and death.

“The voyager,” said the priest, “glides smoothly along, gazing upon the crystal water ; in the twinkling of an eye his boat goes down upon the further side, and

he may not come back. . . . She still clings to the wild love she has nurtured through long years of sorrow," said Father Anselmo, as we came in sight of the new-made grave.

There lingered Mrs. Marvin. Bright flowers strewed the green turf, and fresh garlands were laid upon the altar of small stones we had raised to mark his resting place. We drew near, and the priest repeated in solemn yet sweet thrilling tones, "Sorrow cometh with years, and to live is to mourn. As a mother soothes to sleep the wail of her troubled child, so death opens its arms to the vexed spirit, and cradles in its bosom the unquiet to repose. 'Tis well," continued he, "to visit the graves of those we loved in life; we feel their spirit presence near, and the words we breathe, the prayers we pour forth above the hallowed dust will flow back upon our own hearts, and enrich our inner life. My daughter, you grieve for your lost earthly treasure. I grieve that the love that joined us here was not more perfect, yet grieve not without hope of a resurrection. Yes; as the Psalmist says, the mortal shall put on immortal, and the corruptible put on incorruptible; the dead shall rise again in newness of life."

"Father," I said drawing him a little aside, "I thought your church instituted many ceremonies to be performed over the dying and the dead, even especial prayers to be repeated to insure their happiness."

"Yes; pious Catholics pray for the souls of departed friends, to pass them safely through purgatory, or limbo, as it is called."

"And what do you know of any such future state?"

"Limbo is the state in which the soul enters immediately after death. It has seven degrees or spheres; the eighth is the one where the Eternal—the Holy of Holies dwells, and it is concealed from our view by a thick veil, and we understand our prayers or the prayers of the church are instrumental in raising the departed soul from one sphere to another towards happiness."

"But I have seen no prayers or masses said for the soul of our departed brother."

"No; such ceremony could not satisfy the mind of yonder mourner," said he, pointing to Mrs. Marvin, "because she has not been educated in our church. She will not bow down to worship inferior power, but only the great First Cause of all light and creation. And she would chose to let him sleep, trusting his future to

the God she worships ; trusting the rarified spirit of her husband lingers near, and perhaps has power to influence her in the present life."

"Do you believe she is right," I inquired, with considerable interest.

"Let her dream on, truly, hers is a happy religion. But there is the alarm," and he hastened forward to the chapel, followed at a short distance by the lady and myself.

We entered, and stood a little apart from the kneeling devotees in front of the altar.

The interior of the church, although rudely constructed, was tastefully ornamented with flowers, and a basin of holy water stood before a statue of the Virgin Mary. Several choice paintings adorned the walls, which added to the beauty and mystery pervading the whole, which was darkened and shadowy.

"How beautiful," exclaimed Mrs. Marvin, directing my attention to a painting, a representation of the crucifixion of our Saviour. "Do you not feel like worshipping it too ?

"No ; though I confess admiration, almost adoration is aroused upon beholding an exquisite piece of art, and I rejoice that man can create the beautiful like this, it

incites our emulation, and elicits our praise. The priest tells me they are placed here to incite a spirit of devotion in those who come to worship. But I cannot agree with him in all things ; I do not condemn the love of the beautiful ; yet, I would have them pray to the Invisible Presence who hears our petitions without money and without price.' What do yonder devotees, before the shrine of the Virgin realize of comfort and happiness, speaking in an unknown tongue, praying to the Blessed Virgin, and imploring the saints to present their petitions unto God, and to think, that with less of labor than is now bestowed upon them, they could be taught the only true way the Bible teaches, and receive a greater amount of comfort and happiness. Father Anselmo confessed to me, to-day, that it was the mystery of these forms and ceremonies that kept so many of his followers in subjection. The idea of miracles direct from God, or a movement of a painting, as an oracle of the saints, could work wonders upon the crude mind with which he has to deal."

"And did father Anselmo think himself acting rightly by fostering such superstition ? "

"No. I judge the man revolts from the work ; but said he, 'we may have no sentiments, no judgment, no

feelings of our own, in opposition to the church. Think for one moment of the power of the church, and never doubt the almost utter impossibility of harbouring doubts respecting her infallibility, and her efforts to bring back the wavering disciple," and he gave me a wild look, which I could not fail to interpret.

"I see," I returned in answer to it, "how secretly you work."

"You see," he replied, gazing steadily at me, from out those deep set eyes, "and are you awake? How long shall your watchmen cry 'peace, peace, when there is no peace.' There should be no quiet, inactive, dreamy peace; silently you should labor, 'watch and wait;' you pray for the spread of the gospel," said he, "but wherever your laborers enter, do you not find the cross already planted; and are you not slumbering in peace and pleasure, while the enemy is sowing tares in your homes by the way-side, and in the hearts you love? My country, my country," said he, rising and walking energetically back and forth, with folded arms and head thrown back, "how long will friend and brother slumber at his post? I love thee, I love thee, and my heart yearns toward thy rudest son," then dropping into

a seat, as though fearful he had said too much, he sat silent and the drops of sweat gathered upon his brow and lip. There is such a mystery about this man, that he has power to move me in conversation as few men can."

"True, indeed," continued Mrs. Marvin, "and think what a life he lives, of devotion and sacrifice to religion and charity; is it all for the benefit of the church—the infallible church, as he terms it? Friend, we must know more of him, and his church too," impressively laying her hand upon my arm.

"No," I returned; "let it alone, with all its mysteries, with all its hypocrisy, with all its falsehood, lest one more soul be added to swell its bloated coffers."

"But we may work—we must work, using his own implements of mystery, in favor of the religion of Jesus and freedom of conscience."

Her words seemed almost like inspiration, spoken in a whisper beneath those dim and shadowy rustic arches.

"Here we are plotting heresy within shadow of the altar; do you not fear?" and the sentence was barely spoken, when we were interrupted thus:—

"My children!" and Father Anselmo glided past, giving us his blessing in Spanish.

“We require no representations made by man,” continued Mrs. Marvin, “to reconcile our devotion, if we truly love God, since he bids us come unto him, and him only to receive the waters of eternal life, through Jesus our redeemer and mediator. We find no place in the Bible where we are taught to present our petitions to the Virgin Mary, nor any of the numerous saints who have lived upon earth, wise and pious men though they were, who have entered before us the shadowy temple of death, and rested in the cold silent grave. How cheering the divine assurance, if we draw nigh unto God He will draw nigh unto us. We may cast all our cares and burdens upon Him, who will lighten the load and prove ‘a present help in time of need.’ How sublime the Gospel revelations of light and love, which shall make the desert blossom as the rose. The light which shines upon us from the cross raises our thoughts above the cares and annoyances of a changeful existence, to contemplate the brighter future, and there is an ear ever open to listen to our wants, a spirit that may be touched ‘with a feeling of our infirmities,’ who vouchsafes to us lessons of divine love.”

“He must wear the cross who wins the crown,” said the priest, again standing beside us.

As we passed out, there was borne upon the breeze, laden with the perfume of the orange and magnolia sweet breathing strains from the organ in the chapel, awakening rapturous emotions, as reached our willing ears the solemn chant —

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”

When we were once more seated in the common parlor, said Father Anselmo, “Altha, where did you learn your heresies? and, at the same time, where did you gain your information concerning the doctrines and teachings of the church?”

I glanced at Mrs. Marvin; she was leaning forward, scanning the priest with an earnest, imaginative glance, as though she would penetrate beneath the cowl and cassock. I was surprised to hear him address her by the name of Altha, wondering how he knew it, as I had never heard it.

She continued gazing at him with a troubled expression until he ceased speaking, then her lip quivered, and the tears she could not repress filled her eyes, as she walked to the window to regain her composure. Father

Anselmo had spoken abruptly, not at all like his usual elegant diction; yet I saw nothing to frighten one, and was thinking how nervous she was, when the priest filled a silver cup at the fountain and motioned me to give it to her.

She returned the cup with a sad smile, reminding one of some old heart-wound re-opened by an unlucky speech. "Please excuse me to-night," said she, rising to go, "I will answer your questions at another time," and she walked towards the door, the priest still watching her intently. There must have been some potent charm in his glance, for she turned half round, bent upon him that inquiring gaze, then buried her face in her hands, and would have fallen had he not sprung forward and led her to a seat. He held her hands, folded back the wavy hair, and bathed that classic brow with a few sparkling drops from the cup, altogether appearing quite interested. I could not view any of his movements without suspicion, and I sent a few angry glances towards him, as the thought entered my brain, he is trying what influence he can have upon her; he heeded not my angry looks, but raised a silver shell to his lips, and a few notes from it was answered by

Mrs. Marvin's attendant, and soon after Senorita Isabella entered and passing her arm around Mrs. Marvin, very affectionately led the way to her own room.

How my hopes, my aspirations, and bright dreams of future happiness had become interwoven with the fancy thread of Altha's future, as the Priest called her; there seemed to be no sunshine where she was not. I had learned to love her through her acts of kindness towards others.

For several days I had been debating, in my own mind, whether I should take her with me in my perigrinations through the country, or whether it would be wiser to locate at San Francisco until my stocks had accumulated sufficiently to return to the States, where we might live quietly and cosily, enjoying all the creature comforts and amusements at hand. Her confidence in me with regard to her own plans, often put a damper upon my resolution of broaching the important subject. As she left the room, I felt more than ever anxious to take her away from this mysterious rancho; it savored too much of her own quiet, romantic disposition, to remain longer, not doubting her eagerness to go with me. Thus I strode back and forth, the soft matting giving back no echo of my hasty tread; notwithstanding

Father Anselmo's kind hospitality, I felt inclined to quarrel with him for his meddling influence, and as blindly endeavoring to trace effect to cause, I overleaped the mark in my hasty conclusions. I looked at Father Anselmo, he seemed perfectly oblivious of my presence, standing with his back toward me. He lifted his hands wildly, striking his head as though laboring under powerful emotion, then his arms dropped listlessly by his side, he folded them and walked the room with rapid steps. Wishing to leave him undisturbed, I moved towards the door. he laid a hand upon my shoulder, speaking in his usually friendly tone.

“Stay, Ethan, and keep me company.”

My old brusque manner returning upon the instant, I laughingly inquired, “What for? To keep away the blue 'evils, that have been serving a writ of *habeas corpus* upon your *propria personæ*?”

“No! no! but no matter now, enough to know we waste our energies, and mar our influence holding fancy revels with the buried ghosts of the past, chasing delusive phantoms in the present, and goblin dreams and doubts concerning the future. Perhaps you may find a few drops of the milk of human kindness flowing in my veins; yet, I confess my situation rather isolates me

from sympathy and communion with my fellows. I tell you," said he, nervously, "the sorrows and pleasures, all the cares and joys of existence, even the enthusiasm and energy of passion and fancy, must be stifled from our very souls, and crushed out by the stern mandate of duty."

"Why do you labor then, spending soul and body for the benefit of the church?"

"Do you ask why we labor? How think you the cross is to be planted throughout our glorious land, the convent and the chapel be raised in every dell and valley, and upon every hill-top, how but to labor and to wait?"

I sprang to my feet. "Sir Priest, I begin to comprehend you. Man, you are not what you seem; why not let me sleep on, while you work, and watch, and wait?"

He bent toward me, and answered in a most impressive whisper, "because I love you."

"I fear," said I, "this solitude and study has made you a sad misanthrope. But are you indeed wishing for sympathy? Why have you chosen this unnatural position? Why debar yourself of social pleasures?"

Why make life all a sacrifice? Is it natural, is it scriptural?"

"Pardon me," said he, turning abruptly, "if I leave unanswered, why I do it; as the Poet says,

‘Just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps, I rue it.’

I have sinned and suffered, yet I wait not for Death, neither can I pray for forgetfulness. I ask not fame, nor honor, nor love, greater than that I am fitted to enjoy. We can feel around us an ethereal influence, warning us of good and evil, we can say who, or what are we, then we are lost in the labyrinth of our own conjectures, and we sink down powerless; 'tis but for a moment, we may not, — no, we dare not die; we must live, and we must labor; the decree is written on creation's every page; you are young, and have a work to do; quietly, silently, it may be, yet you must fill your place."

The old man bent upon me those soul-searching eyes, and his long, white locks trembled, as they floated over his coarse, time-worn dress. He continued, as though bent upon reading my thoughts and purposes, "Altha

is admirably calculated to assist you in any situation or profession."

To my stare of astonishment he answered, "Ah, no! 't is not for me, the holy sympathy of woman's love;—the heavenly devotion, the celestial affection of a soul transferred from a star-lit world, to cheer and bless our own. If you win and wear the ethereal gem, I will not say thee nay. Yet, my heart will speak its wildly-beating sympathy, by fondly cherishing the pretty flower that lingers—the lovely Mataka, Altha's child. She is so dazzling fair, so speakingly beautiful, with those soul-full eyes, so darkly blue, and those long golden curls, a cherub mouth, with two tiny rows of pearls between those rolled up rose-leaf lips. Emblem of innocence! blest spot where thy tiny foot-print lingers; thrice happy the pilgrim with whom thou mayest tarry. Thy gleeful laugh cheats us of heavy years, and brushes away the traces of leaden care and the cobwebs of sorrow."

"But, Father Anselmo, Altha, as you call her, doats upon her child; she walks with her in the early morning, she guards her when the sun is high, and when the golden god sinks down toward the western waters, and

makes his resting place among the matchless drapery of evening ; she watches beside her little lace canopy for the noisy fly and cunning spider ; unconsciously she listens to her artless prattle, and childish joy ; indeed, father, her heart, her life almost seems bound up in the fragile child's : by rock and tree, down by the cool bubbling spring, I saw her walking with her child this morning, teaching it holy lessons of truth. She will not part with her."

Strange it seemed to me, that Father Anselmo often visited the little Mataka, lavishing upon her an abundance of presents, sometimes holding her upon his knee, smoothing back those glossy sunlit curls, looking into those great blue eyes. With his usual thoughtfulness, he had fitted up a play-room for her : it was arranged after the rustic fashion of the hermit's cell, and the room was made impervious to the trifling changes of weather, by thickly-set redwood and stunted oak, interlaced with vines. There was just air and sunlight enough flickering and dancing from among the overhanging spray, and luxuriant foliage to make the place seem quite a young Eden. The interior was a perfect parterre of bright and beautiful flowers, chosen both

for display and their delightful fragrance; numerous cages of singing-birds with gorgeous plumage, rare vases, and porcelain fountains dripping with crystal water, sparkling and glad in every stray sunbeam and ruffling zephyr.

The thought that I could provide for Altha's pet flower made me happy, and I thought that Father Anselmo knew how to win his way to the heart of the mother, by these lavish attentions to the child. Whatever the mother's necessities, I did not fear she would give up her child to the influence of the priest, and scarcely divining the drift of his words when he spoke of keeping her I answered, "No doubt you will miss the child."

"Miss her! I cannot part with her; no, no; she cannot go from here unless it is home with the angels! therefore do not speak of it."

CHAPTER XXI.

"FATHER Anselmo, it has been a great subject for speculation with me, where you gathered your numerous clan, speaking every language from the Chinese to the Hottentot, and, likewise, how you keep them under subjection and in harmony with each other."

"The gathering of them together has been the work of years, adding one and another as I have met with them, in peculiar circumstances of misfortune and trouble."

"You have the strongest claims, then, upon their gratitude and, no doubt, find it comparatively easy to assimilate their views to your own."

"One great source of power," said he, "is in gaining their confidence. There is, in unenlightened minds a degree of humanity, and a greater or lesser share of superstition. These materials, moulded by a skilful teacher, will insure obedience to more than ordinary requirement. I could not always feel perfectly

satisfied with my own labors, to depend upon the means I have mentioned, and, therefore, I have gradually laid open to them the scriptures, and found many of them to improve from the lessons of our Saviour. I trust many of them have an anchor of faith upon which to stay their hopes, whose hold is in heaven."

"What!" I exclaimed in astonishment, "this is contrary to your precepts."

"Not exactly. With a teacher, however, I believe they can understand the Bible, and, moreover, that they will feel inexpressible comfort from passages overlooked as unimportant, or given up as mysteries, by the earnest champion of scholastic theology."

"If Mrs. Marvin were here to hear you, she would say you were apostatizing from your church."

"Yes; with so much of home around me, I might be in danger," said he smiling. "See," said he, pointing to his watch, "the vesper light grows dim, shedding its pale ghastly hue upon the cadaverous countenances upturned toward it, warning us to seek our rest and court the goddess of pleasant dreams."

In the cool twilight I wandered forth to enjoy a happy hour; on over the green sward, and along the beatten

paths, beside the dark grey rocks, and 'neath the vine-embowered trees and hedge-rows, I loitered, dreaming of life and happiness and inanimate beauty.

Anon, the distant church organ breathed forth its stirring, solemn music. I knew Mrs. Marvin was in the church, engaged with Senorita Isabella, and I listened to their blended voices in the chant. How unlike they were, those two; yes, unlike in religion, education, everything; yet a strong friendship seems to have sprung up between them. Ah! here comes Father Anselmo. He has been taking one of his long rides, upon some mission of business or charity. He is accustomed to leave us at all hours of the day and night. His horse is as great a study as himself. See, the animal comes with his ears thrown back, his head drooping forward almost to the ground, and he moves with a slow jogging pace, in perfect keeping with the rusty bridle and coarse blanket, one would think bespeaking the poverty of the owner. The horse greatly aroused my curiosity, whenever I saw him in this dejected-looking condition; I had seen him, when Father Anselmo was riding free from observation. Then the animal pricked up his ears, his eye filled with fire and energy, and every limb full of life, bounded before the wind with

the speed of an antelope ; but, at the slightest sound or object in the way before him, or a word or touch from his master, so well trained was he, he would slacken his pace to a creeping walk, putting on this forlorn aspect. The monk dismounted a short distance from me, removed the worn blanket and bridle, and hanging them upon a tree, patted his faithful servant, speaking a few cheering words to him. The noble animal rubbed against his arm, bounded, glanced back at his master, then away to the broad area of rich land to feed upon the tall seed-grass. The monk could call his horse upon the instant, by sounding a few notes on a little reed bugle he carried about his person.

“ Life cannot be all dreary while my horse is left to love me,” said the priest, speaking to himself, approaching with his usual dignified mien. “ My son, engaged in meditation. The Deity can make us feel His spirit-presence, and we are made to understand our relation to Him through the study of his works.”

“ Yes, father, the study of the natural world, in all its grandeur, sublimity, mystery and beauty, I agree with you is good, and must lead us to worship the Author, but who is the Author ? ”

“ He who has given to man an iota of divine will, —

the power of life, is the connecting link between God and humanity, by which we know him. Who," said the priest, "has power of his own will to live? No one. Then who will say there is no God? This power enables us to make ourselves fit companions for angels, or sink down until we become even as devils."

"Even so; but, Father, I have always heard this is a hard, wicked world; yet, I like it, and often think it is not so bad a world after all."

"My son, 'tis how we take it. Although I have been beaten and buffeted by the winds and waves of misfortune over two-thirds of this habitable globe. I can still say I love this beautiful world of ours; and could we trust one another, heart to heart, as friend and brother, we should rejoice in an earthly paradise—a heaven upon earth."

"Shall we live to see the good time coming?"

"God grant we may," said the monk; "for as our pathway is onward, it must be improving in good or degenerating into evil. The good would unfold the millennial glory; the evil dawn upon the day when the heavens shall pass away as a scroll, and the earth shall melt with fervent heat."

“Go on, if you please, Father Anselmo,” said Ethan.

Anselmo continued: “All things are created for good, be it ever so lowly.”

“They live their day and die in the arms of grim decay; they waste away and are forgotten; yet they were created for our use, our pleasure and comfort. We chose some and neglect others. Man exists like the bird and the flower—he has his day and decays. Was man created without a motive?”

“A little lower than the angels. In the likeness of God.”

“When we die the spirit returns to the Creator: if we have done well, we feel we are going home; if ill, that we are none of his.”

“Now, what makes the savage create, in his rude manner, an object of worship, but this spark of the indwelling spirit of God with which he is endowed.”

Ethan answered his question by asking another: “I see, Father Anselmo, you are charitably disposed towards your kind, and suppose the reason you admit to your lodge in the wilderness such a variety of persons, you find about them a little spark of godliness, or some redeeming quality, hid beneath the dust and rub

bish of years, and you give them a helping hand, hoping to make them more worthy."

"Not of myself alone do I it, but the spirit of God which says to them, 'My children, O how can I give thee up! Come unto me.'"

"And what, if they will not come unto Him?"

"Then He may do with them as He will, as they are in his hands, — as clay in the hands of the potter."

"But religion," I remarked, interrogatively, "is made to die by."

"True religion, my son, is likewise made to live by. It should accompany us everywhere, in every department of business and pleasure, — in every act of life, not to spend itself in pompous words, noisy prayers, and pharisaical alms-giving; but to act upon, in quiet lessons of love and charity to our fellows, to rest and lean upon in the hour of trouble and temptation. Our religion should be a part of ourselves, not a set formula for which we need blush or cavil, because unlike our neighbors; we should only be ashamed for want of it, as displaying our ignorance of self and our divine origin."

We continued our walk for a time in silence, myself

wishing I had been longer acquainted with this same priest.

"Senorita Isabella plays well," I ventured to remark, as the whispering breeze caught and repeated the harmony of song from the little chapel.

"Yes, and Altha spends much time with her."

"I am happy to know they love each other."

"But who is Senorita Isabella? tell me something of her."

"It is the hour for my duties in the oratory, after which I will be at your service," and smiling benignly, he left me.

CHAPTER XXII.

ISABELLA VENICIA was of Spanish blood, queenly in her carriage, and very beautiful. Her regal head sat lightly upon that arching neck and gracefully sloping shoulders, seeming all unconscious of its being worthy of admiration. Her shining tresses were put up in braids, luxuriant waves and curls fastened occasionally with a diamond pin or a sprig of pearls, with a white muslin veil thrown over the whole, reaching nearly to the floor. She wore, upon this evening, a robe of dark velvet, lined with silk *colour de rose*, thrown carelessly over a costlier dress of white silk elaborately embroidered. I marked the richness of her costume, although she was simply dressed for comfort in her own quiet boudoir.

Said Father Anselmo, "our Isabella is the sister of Juan Venicia, who crosses your path so often, as the ferocious looking Mexican, Mrs. Marvin's attendant, or the Spanish gentleman, disturbing your reveries, smoking the everlasting cigarette, while he ponders on your Yankee notions and movements."

Notwithstanding Father Anselmo's serious aspect, there was an under current of humor governing his words and acts, which made me feel quite at home with him, instead of the cold, calculating spirit I had expected to find. He continued:

"The old Don, their father, was a descendant of the Montezumas, of wealth and distinction. When trouble occurred between the States and Mexico, causing the war, the Don was deeply engaged in it, and during the contention for their rights, he lost both life and property. Juan and myself being firm friends, accompanied each other to this place, which had formerly been a station for the holy Fathers, now ruined and dilapidated; and here we spent many years in preparing it to suit our own peculiar ideas. After the death of Don Venicia, and the loss of fortune, it was decided expedient for Isabella to return to the convent where she had been educated. But *senorita* was quite too fond of the gay world, and had been too long a captive bird to wish to enter those grey old gloomy walls. 'Besides, brother Juan,' she would say, 'I do n't like this institution which consecrates only a few of its handsomest and noblest maidens, and leaves the rest free to enjoy themselves. Now Don Juan,' she would say, playfully, 'I

see no religion in occupying that crib of a cell and counting my rosary and telling my prayers from morning until morning again, when I so love the sunshine, and my thoughts are with the birds, longing for the flowers and the company of my friends."

"In that case, *senorita*, I fear you will have to do penance often."

"But that would not prevent me from wishing again to be free, and then I should have to go over all again, confess and do penance until I should hate myself and fear Father Joseph more than all."

"You frighten me, *senorita*, railing at our holy requirements. I must turn you over to our confessor and let him deal with you."

"Rather, brother, deal with me from your own kind heart, and let me go with you," said she coaxingly.

"Were not the Lady Abbess and the Sisters kind to you?"

"Yes; oh! so kind. But I used to lie awake nights thinking of them, with their beautiful hair hid beneath the veil or the ugly black hood, their marble cheeks and pallid lips, and their great eyes forever looking within as though tracing the memory of some great heart-sorrow. Oh! I never could be so good and weep

my strength, my life away, doing penance for every thought and act of erring flesh." And then she continued, in her earnestness, "When they have taken the vows, are they not as good as buried alive? Who will know it, or care for them, if they are sick, and suffering, and dying, alone, in their distant cells? The door is opened in the morning, are they dead! Who knew how much she suffered, alone, in that darkened cell? Who sat beside her and watched her lamp of life going out, and cheered her as she neared the valley of shadows? None. The novices may visit the chancel, crowd around the bier and look upon those clay-cold features, and be told to follow her bright example; then she is forgotten, unless her ghost is conjured up, wrapped in its white garments, gliding about those dim corridors to frighten the refractory into obedience. Oh! I know I should die."

"Fie, senorita, you are too imaginative, too romantic."

"But senorita gained her point. She is known here as the 'Lady of the Chapel.' She plays upon the organ, of which she is passionately fond, and attends to those who come to the chapel to seek charity or to worship. Don Juan and myself, together, own this rancho,

and share all the care and the profits besides, his numerous influential friends throughout the country, furnish him enough to attend to, and myself, too, when not engaged in the duties of my office, which is partly devoted to charity."

"But Ethan, your party were not objects of charity. No doubt, you thought it was rather miraculous that Father Anselmo and his followers should take so great an interest in you."

"Exactly, Halvor ; I puzzled my brain about it until I could not think at all, and as often made up my mind, that I would not leave Mrs Marvin and her child in the hands of the priest, or his servants."

"Don Venicia intends sending Senorita Isabella to the capital soon, that she may form an alliance worthy her beauty and station," said he as we separated.

Upon entering the parlor I found the ladies there before me. Mrs. Marvin was seated upon an ottoman, near the window, intent upon watching the distant sky. Senorita Isabella was reclining upon a pile of crimson embroidered cushions, one arm resting upon the ottoman and with her hand brushing back the muslin veil which fell in heavy folds over her neck and shoulders ; she

was accustomed to appear well if not richly dressed, the envious veil was worn to defy the curious; her clear brunette complexion, the raven blackness of her shining tresses, added to the expression of lofty pride of birth stamped upon her features, formed a delightful contrast to the delicate features, large blue eyes, brown wavy hair, and subdued heavenly expression of Altha. I seated myself in silence, not willing to destroy so charming a tableau. The senorita was the first to break the spell.

“O, how charming this hour? I love to watch the darkness stealing so gently, so silently downward from cloud-curtains fashioned to lull earth’s weary children to rest. How beautiful the language it speaks to the soul. I fancy I can feel the spirit presence of the good angels, with their starry wings folded, amid the darkness, hovering near, breathing, ‘God is love.’”

Mrs. Marvin turned her gaze upon Senorita Isabella, as she replied, “The influence of this hour, with its lofty enthusiasm goes to make up the poetry of existence; but to understand that God is love, we must see Him in His plan of redemption to a fallen world.

“Senora, why so?”

“Else our bright view of His love might be dispelled by a less beautiful view before us. For instance, as a learned divine expresses it, ‘If a tornado was devastating and sweeping everything to destruction, the confidence which had been, by an exhibition which appeared eloquent of the benevolence of God, would yield to horror and trepidation, while the Eternal One seemed walking before us, the tempest his voice, the lightning his glance, and a fierce devastation in every footprint.’ Senorita,” continued Mrs. Marvin, “I too enjoy this peaceful happy hour, and think to commune with the friends I have loved and lost. Yet I love to look beyond the arcadian divinity drawn from the beauty of the landscape, to divine teaching, where we learn God loved us so well, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for us, that the sacrifice of His blood might be a propitiation for our sins. Then I can feel the immeasurableness of God’s love.”

“Senora, since you acknowledge the Saviour, why do you not kneel before the crucifix or the Virgin during prayer?”

“Isabella, please tell me first, why you do it?”

“To incite in one’s mind a spirit of devotion. We

also present our petitions to the Holy Mother, that she may present them to her Son, and by Him to the Eternal Father."

"Senorita, I learn from the scriptures, that our heavenly Father not only gives us the blessed privilege of coming direct to Him with our petitions, but commands us to do so, asking all in the name of Jesus, for Christ's sake. Therefore, as to a kind and heavenly Father, we may come to him ; and, if we have the true spirit of prayer, we need no representation made by man to incite us to duty. Neither can I find in the Bible any command or injunction, to present our petitions to the Virgin Mary."

"Senora, do you likewise doubt this command of the church—'Confess your sins to the priest, that he may absolve you' ; you do not obey it?"

"Because I find no authority for it in the Bible. St. Paul said to his brethren of the church, 'confess your sins one to another, that through their prayers ye may obtain forgiveness.' But we learn, senorita, that we must repent, and humbly pray to God that he will deliver us from sin, and suffer not our natural feelings to be overcome with temptation ; and we have the assurance from

the Bible, if we watch and pray, and strive to overcome sin, we shall have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to keep us in the right way."

"Tell me why you do not worship the host?"

"How could I worship it while I have the privilege of reading the Bible, and power of mind to understand it? Christ instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, blessing the bread and wine, and enjoining it upon His disciples to do it in remembrance of Him. Therefore, we consecrate the bread and wine by prayer and faith. 'And of the cup, he gave thanks, and gave it unto them, [his disciples] saying drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins; this do as oft as ye drink of it in remembrance of me; for as often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death, till he come.' We break bread, bless the cup, and drink it, following his example, thereby becoming his disciples, the clergyman serving as Christ's servant. Now, Seniorita Isabella, I learn your church teaches that the priest turns the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, by transubstantiation, then calls upon all the

people to adore it as the host. Here the priest goes through with a multiplicity of ceremonies, representing Christ's sufferings and death, then makes 'an ablution, a sacrifice to God of the host, which he affirms to be the real body and blood of Christ. The church suffers the laity to partake of the bread, teaching them 'tis sufficient for them as they receive whole Christ under one kind ; that the priest, because he offers the sacrifice, and represents the bloody sacrifice upon the cross, is bound to receive the cup and drink it, from the command expressed to his disciples, 'drink ye all of it.' "

" But are not those his disciples who endeavor to obey his instructions, and follow his example ? "

" Isabella, we are both taught these things, but how widely different."

" We have the evidence of the Pope, senora, that we are right."

" What Pope, my dear ? "

" Why, St. Peter ; he was the first Pope."

" And from what do you learn that, and gain a knowledge of the Pope's authority ? "

" From the church whose oral and written traditions have been handed down from generation to generation."

" Thank you," said Mrs. Marvin, smiling. " The

very reason you have given would banish all faith in popery, since there is room to doubt the correctness of these oral traditions, from the knowledge that there is so much chance for error to creep in."

"But you must not doubt the authority of the church; she is infallible."

"But, senorita, how can I believe in her infallibility, when I may search the scriptures and use my own judgment."

"But you will not be allowed your own judgment. The church forbids her children to read the Bible, except under the eye, and with the assistance of the priest."

"I know it, Senorita Isabella, therefore would not intelligent men and women become mere machines subject to their will and power, is it not so?"

Senorita looked down, somewhat puzzled, and confused; while I sat looking on with wrapt attention. Soon after we had commenced the conversation, Father Anselmo had come in and taken a seat in the shade; neither Mrs. Marvin nor Senorita Isabella being aware of his proximity to our circle.

"Senora," continued Isabella, "you talk away everything connected with the holy Catholic church;

do you also deny the necessity of good works? The priest teaches us to do penance and good works, that we may obtain the favor of the church, and merit heaven."

"Senorita, our translation of the Hebrew teaches us to repent, that we may obtain forgiveness. I find no such word as penance."

"The Catholic church," said Isabella, earnestly, "teaches us we can never do enough to merit the forgiveness of Heaven."

"My dear friend," rejoined Mrs. M., laying her hand affectionately upon Isabella's arm, "this is only another place where the Catholic church contradicts itself, as you will see; you profess to believe in the sacrifice of Christ's blood as an atonement for sin, taking for granted we are sinners from the commencement, which sin we have inherited with our human nature, and take from God all the glory of the sacrifice, which he offers a free offering to all, and every one, who will accept of it, and which, he says, is sufficient to cleanse from sin, 'though they be as scarlet, they shall be white as wool.'"

"Then, senora, we have nothing to do but accept of it."

"O yes, everything to do which was our duty from the beginning, to serve God as a dear master, and love

Him as a kind parent. What right have we to hope to obtain favor with God by giving Him that which already belongs to Him?"

"Senora, if I do all, and more than is required of me, in penance and good works, ought it not to be of some merit with God?"

"If you give alms, whose is the money? 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts.' If you mortify the flesh, whose are the macerated limbs? If you put sack-cloth upon the soul, whose is the chastened spirit? If you be moral and honest, and friendly and generous, and patriotic, whose is the disposition you exercise, whose are the powers to which you give culture and scope? And if we only use God's gifts can that be meritorious?"

"Yes," said Isabella, "to use aright, while others abuse them. But it would be wickedness to abuse them. Therefore, it can be only duty to use aright; and duty is merit when debt is donation. We must still say, when we have done the best we can, 'all things come of Thee, and of thine own, O God, I have given thee.'"

Glancing at my watch, I found we had been unmindful of the flight of time, and also unaware that we had been listening to a sermon while conversing so famili-

arly. Here Juba, Mataka's nurse, was aroused from her position, where she had been curled up in the shadow of a chair, her head resting upon her hands, fast asleep, and sent off with Mataka; the child having come in softly, while we were talking, for the good-night kiss, and climbing upon her mother's lap, was likewise asleep, nestled in those loving arms. Senorita Isabella arose and settled herself among the cushions of the lounge with a look of weariness, from her previous wrapt attention. Mrs. Marvin appeared least fatigued, and she smiled as I stretched my long limbs, examined the toe of my boot and thrust my hands into my pockets. After partaking a glass of water from the fountain, by way of refreshment, we were prepared to take a fresh start. Father Anselmo still remained in the shade, not a movement from him, betrayed his position.

"Mrs. Marvin you have told us before this evening, that you believe there is a God. Now why do you believe it?"

"Why, Ethan, we feel it." Then after a few moments pause, she added: "A controversy that would last a life time, could give us no more satisfactory answer than this, we feel it. If there is not within our

nature that which teaches us, there is a power superior to our own. Why does the heathen, who has never heard of God or revelation, make images to worship?"

I love to be on the negative side in every argument or question, and accordingly inquired, "if there is a God, and the Bible is true, why do not all christians see these things alike?"

"They feel the inward comfort of them; but it is impossible for all persons to see exactly alike, where there is ground for argument or controversy."

"Then, you allow the Bible contradicts itself," I remarked with no little surprise and haste.

"My dear friend," said she, "this is one of the greatest charms and strongest proofs, that the scriptures are of divine origin,—that when a person doubts and endeavors to prove it false, by theology and human reason, he gets completely lost in the intricacies and windings, and confounded; all is darkness and blindness. On the other hand, read it with an unbiased mind, free from prejudice, and lifting the thought in prayer to God, in the words of the Psalmist: 'O Lord open thou mine understanding, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law,' and we shall find that it contains

sufficient for consolation, instruction, and reproof for all conditions of men, one verse hinging upon another, a perfect whole."

"Mrs. Marvin, when you speak of God you speak of him as a being to love; now, some hold him up as a being to fear."

"True; for how can we have a perfect image of God, unless we have a just as well as a loving one. If we will not hearken unto him, nor own him as our God, nor try to obey him, would it not be right that he should punish us, if he pleases. That is a question concerning which I have often demurred, and had any one but your self preferred it I should have been half vexed,"

"Why, my kind friend, should you be angry with any reasonable questions?"

"I can scarcely tell why; yet, it is hard to acknowledge some of the doctrines. For instance, God, knowing all things from the beginning, and ordaining or knowing that some will be saved and certain others lost."

"I will give you a simile put in the simplest language possible. Were you to invent a machine, you alone

would know its powers, and, consequently, apply to it the necessary means to have it work according to your design. But, suppose in the material used or added in its construction, you add a free will of its own, by which it may choose of itself to work right or wrong; and, if it work wrong, whereby all is confusion, ought there to be any blame attached to you as the author, since the machine exercised the power to chose for itself?"

"Why, Mrs. Marvin, would not the author, who is superior to his work, exert an influence upon it to make it work aright?"

"My dear friend, Ethan, the Author of our being does exert an influence upon us in every good thought in every generous act of humanity, in the beauty of each tiny flower and waving tree, the plentiful harvest, the sleeping lake—a mirror of God's works, in the thunder, amid the storm, upon the mountain, in the avalanche. From all and every work from God's great storehouse of creation, a voice is heard, a whisper goes forth, 'God, God!' and our souls give back the answering echo, 't is true.' Wherefore should we not love and obey him?"

Father Anselmo startled us by coming forward; his

firm step sounding heavier than usual, his arms folded, and his eye resting on us as though studying every face before him. I glanced at Mrs. Marvin ; she sat calmly and looked up as he approached, with her usual fearless gaze. Senorita Isabella seemed to sink into the lounge, as though to escape his anger. As for myself, I felt anything but agreeably disposed for the storm I imagined ready to burst upon us.

“Madam,” and Father Anselmo drew himself up with more than usual dignity and *hauteur*, “allow me to ask how you acquired such a knowledge of the Catholic church as you seem to possess, from what you have already said, while thoroughly impregnated with the opinions of schismatics ?”

“With pleasure, Father Anselmo : indeed, in consideration of your great kindness to me and mine, I feel it my duty to answer all your questions as candidly and explicitly as you wish, and in order to do so, I must call up some buried memories of my childhood, which seem to me like a waking dream. Do you wish me to particularize, Father ?”

“I will listen,” said he, with frigid politeness, as he drew a chair and seated himself near us.

"In commencing," said Mrs. Marvin, "I will explain my emotion of yesterday."

"As you please," said he, "I have no doubt you had good reasons for being agitated."

"Thank you ; it is so difficult to keep one's feelings always under control."

"Yes ; proceed."

I was quite irritated towards the priest for the cool important manner he had assumed for the occasion, however, it seemed advisable not to notice it. I was likewise anxious to hear the story.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONCE I had a brother, by me dearly, oh yes, wildly loved! but years—long dreary years—he has been lost, for I know not at what season he was called from earth, to him a home of trial, nor where his precious dust reposes. He left in the morning of his days, in the first flush of his bright youth, and no tidings ever reached us of his fate.

There was something, Father Anselmo, in your manner and tone, last evening, that reminded me so much of him, that I could not suppress my emotions, and it has been ever thus since he went away.

With every tone or word, however lightly spoken, and every feature that I see resembling his own, I start and turn pale, or quiver with the half-frenzied, expectant longing for his dear presence, feeling there is but a small space between us, and that he is waiting to clasp me in a brother's earnest embrace. Alas! that vain chimera vanishes, and I fall back again in utter hope-

lessness as I hear the frozen, icy words lost, lost, forever. It was in an evil hour, and under strong temptation, that Edwin left us. He was suspected of having been witness or abettor of some wrong dealing towards his employer, who was also his and our guardian, and held a large property in trust for us, left by our deceased father.

Father Anselmo's fingers trembled slightly, and he raised his hand nervously to his head. But only the white locks drooped a little lower from beneath the cowl, shading more effectually than ever the countenance of the old man.

All search for poor Edwin proved fruitless, and Deacon Breck could gain no knowledge of his missing property, or the depradators, who had infested his premises. He, therefore, made this excuse serve his purpose for withholding, not only my brother's, but all of my sister's and my own property, with a large share of my mother's portion. Children, though we were, we were thrown upon our own resources, and our dear mother's failing health and energies soon aroused us to every exertion. Yet again, death, cold and relentless, severed the chain that bound us to earth. We were

orphans, and alone! Our mother had gone home, where the blue ether hides her spirit from our longing gaze, and we were left to struggle on in this mid uncertain light of earth. Thanks to a few kind friends, we were not left entirely desolate with this fresh bereavement. O, indeed, we were grateful to our friends for all their kind words and ready sympathy, which was of great benefit to us, to gain an education, or rather finish the one our parents had planned and commenced.

Geneva, for that was my sister's name, always fell in with pious, kind-hearted people, and consequently glided along smoothly and pleasantly. She had a strong will, decided in every purpose, firm and unyielding in the path of right. She became a member of the christian church where she resided, — exemplary and beloved. I loved her none the less, nay, rather revered her for this, although myself so differently situated. Religion, with my young companions, was a subject of ridicule, and a by-word. They seemed to feel a serious countenance and a sanctimonious air, as they expressed it, to be dreaded; and who of our class-mates dare read the Bible, for fear of being pointed out as pious, by the rest. I often felt vexed at their wrong impressions and their

want of nobleness, their utter want of independence, that feared to look anything in its face or try to discover its horrible shape. But I had the power to love my friends, devotedly, perhaps too well, for I was often made to feel the insufficiency of human friendship to perfect happiness. Still, there was always some kind friend or generous acquaintance, to aid me with sympathy or counsel. Through the influence of some of these noble friends, I was admitted into Madam R——'s school, situated in a delightful retreat, a few miles from the modern Athens of America. Madam R—— was a thoroughly accomplished lady. My sympathies were enlisted whenever she spoke of the destruction of the Ursuline Convent, where she had been educated; and the more I loved her the more anxious I was to become acquainted with Catholic institutions.

In justice to her, I must say, she always left us, with regard to religious sentiments, entirely unbiassed in our opinions. I wondered that she would not advise me to enter the convent walls too. However, all our pleasant chats upon the subject would amount to this: "I know, a thorough education is desirable; but, then, what sacrifice, what powers of self-denial, and endurance to gain

it, to live within those sombre walls. Besides, one needs to have their principles established, together with a strong, yea, a stubborn will, else they would succumb to the influence around them, so completely isolated from the world."

I felt mortified: did she doubt my strength of purpose, my rectitude of principle. No; but she had lived and knew it to be ever thus. In the pride of our young life, ere temptation has assailed our weak points, we feel strong as a Sampson 'bearing the gates of the city;' yet, how many, living along in a wearying round of duty, and endless monotony of existence, without an object to direct or cheer, would not pine for the voice of sympathy, yea, almost kneel and worship one bringing even a ray-light of love and affection, where numbers might command and entreat in vain for a like homage."

"My daughter," said Father Anselmo, "thou hast spoken truly. Oh! why must we love, why must we suffer, ere we can see the path of duty? How many," said he, clasping his hands convulsively, "how many have I seen rise, pale and affrighted, with the cry of agony, 'Oh! God, I have sinned,' and folding the pinions of innocence, lie down in the dust to mourn.

But they dare not die. No ; they must live on, although existence but adds a deeper shame, though life prove a bitter curse. But go on," said he, "though my heart must bleed for the fallen, I will not mar your joy with such bitter lessons."

Mrs. Marvin continued : " My life was constantly subject to change. At the expiration of a twelvemonth after I entered the seminary, my loved teacher was married, and removed a long journey to the west; while I was left again upon " life's broad ocean, without rudder or compass." But a kind Providence opened to me a new door and furnished new friends, and with a hopeful heart, I counted the tall spires, and noticed the big trees rising so fatherly-like above the pretty village we were entering. It was situated just a pleasant drive from the city, and afforded every facility for pleasure and happiness. For the next two years I enjoyed advantages from the best of masters. An Episcopal clergyman, who was much respected, and dearly beloved, kindly directed, in part, my studies. Even now, how truly I love him, and his gentle lady-wife. But they never dreamed that beneath my calm, cold exterior, there beat a heart brimming o'er with affection, where they too, were sacredly enshrined. But a new query aroused me from my dream

of peace and serenity. Would I join a few of my classmates who were going to be confirmed upon the next visit of the Bishop? I was startled into the inquiry — What right had I to do so? was I a christian? I loved the clergyman and his lady, consequently I loved their religion; nay, more, I loved the deep impassioned lessons of the church; its few ceremonies, its impressive prayers. The heaven breathing music from the fine old organ, the glorious chant, the solemn pause, all seemed tinged with heavenly love-light, a holy calm just suited to my dreamy temperament. However, these were not in accordance with the requirements of my mother's church, — all that was needful to make me a christian; I must meet with a great change; some remarkable impressions, that would affect all of my future life. I walked home from school that day, pondering upon the subject; locking the door of my room, I sat down, to examine more fully, to learn, if indeed these things were so. I heeded not the kindly call, where Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd, through whom is the way and the life." My eye rested upon the creed, "I believe in the holy Catholic church." Many times I had repeated this sentence, without asking the simple question, what or

where is the Catholic church? In history I had passed it without comment, or thought of it as having existed, with all its cruelties and evils, only in the dark ages; of course, such barbarisms were no longer extant among this enlightened nation. The next day I applied to one of my classmates, the daughter of a high-churchman, 'twas said. To solve the mystery, "Adaline," said I, "are the Episcopal and Catholic churches alike?" "Alike!" her eye flashed and her cheek flushed with anger. "No," she answered, "they are widely, essentially different."

"Do they believe alike?"

"No; and if they say so, they lie and contradict themselves. If out but a step from us, they cannot be like us. They are schismatics. If you had applied to your kind pastor, he would have satisfied your mind by pointing out to you the falsehood, idolatry and priestcraft that had crept into the *Catholic* church, previous to the Reformation, until the religion of Jesus had been lost sight of, through man's invention. I know it now, Father Anselmo," said Mrs. Marvin, smiling, "yet, please remember, I was quite a child then, groping around like a blind man, or drifted, with every current,

like a boat without rudder or compass. However, in order to enlighten me, Adaline lent me her catechism, prayer-book, mass-book and some lives of the saints, which were much in favor in their church. I even visited the city, and attended one of the first Catholic churches. To me it seemed full of imposing ceremonies, that effectually do away the word of God, and make it of none effect. I was constantly confounded with the multiplicity of ceremony, and the lessons, which required so much time to learn and retain, besides the sermons and prayers, many of them were in Latin, which I did not understand. The more I read the Bible, and the books that Adaline had lent me, and compared them, the more I was decided, that I could not make a good Catholic."

"But, did you not soon learn that you would not be allowed to read the Bible, except under the eye or direction of the priest?"

"Yes, Ethan; but there must have been 'a little of the leaven of the old lump,' that caused our ancestors so much trouble, in my composition. I would not believe in the Pope's power to absolve from sin, because I learned, 'the sacrifice of Christ's blood was the only remission for sin;' neither could I pray to the Virgin

Mary, when I had from infancy been accustomed to repeat, 'Our Father who art in Heaven.'"

"It seems you learned quite early, to pass unheeded all the minor finger-posts and charts pointing to Heaven's gate, heeding only the all-important directions through Jesus Christ. You there, Don Venicia, concealed by the window drapery; 'tis fortunate I am surrounded by friends, these gloomy shadows can hide so many listeners."

In answer, Don Venicia raised his dagger half-menacingly over Mrs. M., then sheathing it, occupied a seat near her as she continued :

"Death again invaded the happy home where I resided ; my friend, the father of that cherished family, gave up his schemes, his ambition, his love, to become a tenant of the cold and quiet grave. Our house was draped with black, our hearts were covered with mourning. How beautifully and appropriately it has been written, 'mourn for the living and not for the dead.' I might have been houseless and homeless, had it not been, my sister's hospitable mansion loomed up in the distance ; soon entering upon the cares and duties of wedded life, I imagined myself entirely forgotten by the gifted pastor and my early associates. I was only

reconciled to be forgotten, as it spared me from giving them pain by relating the doubts and vexations I had experienced while blindly endeavoring to search out the right way."

"And what are you now?" inquired Don Venicia, who was a privileged character everywhere.

"I know not what you will call me," replied Mrs. Marvin, smiling. "I have adopted as my creed the simple lessons of 'Jesus of Nazareth.'"

Father Anselmo arose and laying his hand upon Altha's brow, reverently pronounced a blessing. Mrs. M. clasped the monks hand within her own; as she bent above it I saw a tear fall from her drooping lids and glisten upon his hand. Her attitude, so full of reverence and love, again filled my mind with suspicion and envy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“Dost thou deem it
Such an easy task from the fond heart
To root affection out.”

“WELL,” said plain common-sense, looking familiarly over my shoulder, “it’s high time you were off, now your attentions are not required ; it is an imperative duty for you to look after your own affairs a bit.” “I know it,” said I, echoing the phantom tone, “but I cannot leave without speaking to Altha to share my future. Her presence is really necessary to my happiness and prosperity, nay, my very existence.”

“Certainly,” said the phantom, mockingly, and in cold, provoking tones. “Why not ask her then?”

“Why, I am going to ; yes ; I am decided ; to-morrow I’ll broach the subject, and learn the worst, if worst there is in store for me. But there can be no need to fear.”

“*No need to fear,*” tauntingly echoed the phantom, as in sleepless vexation I tossed upon my couch until dawn.

The morrow had come at last. So to every weary lagging night succeeds a new, if not a brighter day. I waited until Senorita Isabella was engaged in the chapel. Father Anselmo had started upon one of his accustomed rides, and Don Juan, I fancied, *was out of the way*, no one knew where. Mataka was asleep under her little lace house, watched by her affectionate African attendant, while Mrs. Marvin had taken the paper, and removed to the parlor sofa. I ventured forth, feeling like a culprit going forward to hear his sentence of life or death, every nerve alive and thrilling with hope of reprieve, while the very heart-strings are cracking with the fear that an unpropitious fate awaits him.

Mrs. Marvin looked up, smiled her welcome, and laid aside her paper at my approach. Often before I had tried to speak to her, but had not sufficient courage to do so. Even at that moment I felt it to be the most difficult thing I ever attempted to do. My lips compressed, a red spot burned on each cheek; I had found it an easy matter to make love to others; but then, I had reasoned, she is such a different character. She motioned me to a seat beside her; every limb trembled with excitement; yet, why need I fear? she certainly

would not cherish any great sorrow for her husband; how could she, for whom she had suffered so much? He, perhaps, contributed but little to her happiness. True, I never discovered anything but the most earnest affection and unwearied tenderness; yet she had made many sacrifices for his comfort. Now, she was alone.

“Squire Eldridge, you seem sad this morning. Have you received unpleasant news?”

“No bad news, Mrs. Marvin; but I propose returning to San Francisco to-morrow.”

“Do you indeed?” and a cloud rested upon her features.

“Yes, and have sought you this morning, to acquaint you with my hopes that you will accompany me, or come when I call you, when I would come for you.”

Her head leaned forward her eyelids closed, and her cheek was pale as marble; her lip quivered, as I had seen it upon one or two previous occasions. Surely, some cruel pain must have entered her heart, to cause such emotion. I took her hand; it rested in mine, sending a thrill of hope through every nerve.

“Ethan, I thank you; but am wholly unprepared for this. I have thought of you as a brother, as one, you

are very dear to me, and your kindness, — how large the debt of gratitude I owe you? May God bless and reward you. With love such as you require, I cannot repay you; mine is in the grave. Indeed I may say Love's flowers have withered, its fires gone out. I am left to mourn over the mouldering ruins, the blackened fragments, the heart a wreck of hopes and fears."

"But, Altha, think of Mataka, — think of your child."

"To Him who provides for the sparrows I can safely commend my child."

"Still I think of you, and, my dear friend, sadly it grieves me to give you one moment's pain." I sprung up and crossed the room. I would fain grind out the unoffending carpet beneath my feet. The unmanly tear would start. Pressing my hands over my eyes, I sat down by the table, and leaned my head upon it. Altha had spoken so kindly, yet so decidedly, shutting out every gleam of hope, that I had no power to move from the room, nor to subdue the fierce passion raging within me. I forgot her presence, and was, alike unconscious of the time that was hastening on, and everything, but the agony, mingled with anger and shame; and this

must be some of the monk's influence. Fool that I had been, to trust her in his power.

A gentle touch upon my arm, a soft hand raised my head, and Mrs. Marvin pressed her fingers upon my brow and smoothed back the disordered hair. I was powerless, else I might have rudely thrown off that gentle hand.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, "what more can I bear?"

"Ethan, Ethan! my more than brother! it will kill me to see you thus."

She bent down and imprinted a kiss upon my forehead. How soothing, how cooling to my burning brain? All my faculties stood still. Was it because her's was now the stronger will, and mine must submit? She smiled so sweetly, making me forget the bitterness I had felt.

"Ethan, you will not regret my decision. Your's is a noble destiny. I feel it—I know it. Your ambition will lead you on; it will be your glory, your pride, to labor for the advancement of your race. You will emulate your noble countrymen in every good work. No selfishness will blind you, no petty cares make you for-

get a duty ; and happier still, your hope is staid on heaven."

There I sat, as calmly as though every passion had died beneath the magic of her touch, the potency of her words. She held out her hand ; I pressed it fervently to my lips ; she walked away ; I had no right to complain, and must see my cherished plans frustrated, — yet, I must learn to endure it. I hastened from the room and stepped out upon the verandah. Where was my hat ? I would return to the parlor for it. Mrs. Marvin was negligently reclining upon the divan, and weeping passionately. I sprung forward and kneeling beside her, clasped those listless fingers.

"Tell me, O tell me, for it is my turn to question, why do you weep ? Do you repent your cruel decision ? Give me the power to make you happy, and I will be your slave."

She arose with a calm more fearful than the spent storm ; her eye flashed, her form raised proudly, and from those pallid lips burst a faint though stern command,

"No, no ! I tell you, no ! and raising her hand, she pointed homeward ; "in that loved though distant land,

you have left a beautiful, happy bride, and a fair destiny awaits you. Go !”

I sprang from her presence, in my haste overturning everything that came in my way. Even now, I look back upon that scene with little less of calmness, thinking she must have been a wonder of a woman. Taking a few turns in the garden, I was suddenly brought to a stand, by running against Father Anselmo, who presented too formidable an obstacle in my way for me to run over. Although he must have noticed my fearful agitation, he made no comment, but quietly drawing my arm within his own, we turned aside into a quiet, lovely walk.

“Father Anselmo, I must go to San Francisco to-night.”

“*Must you*, my son ?”

“Yes, I must.”

“My son, remain with us one more night, and, to-morrow, if you wish, I will send an escort with you.”

“But I cannot stay.”

“My son, is your business so very urgent ?”

“No, Father ; but Altha ——”

“What of her ? You love her ?”

"I *did*!"

"And she cannot return it?"

"Exactly."

"I thought as much."

I felt angry with him: some more of his influence, thought I.

He continued: "No wonder, poor child; her past experience makes her fear to hope; her heart is like this vase," and he touched with his foot a beautiful alabaster one standing beside the walk. "Some months ago," said he, "upon this bed of sweetbriar, I noticed this vase, that some careless hand had dropped, severed in twain. I come again; the weeds and the briar had grown, lifting up the broken pieces of the vase, and wreathing around it, had bound it together, when the dust of time, the morning sun and evening dew had formed a cement impervious to the storm, leaving only this weather-beaten seam. Now, it fills with the soft rain and gentle dew, repaying a thousand fold of life and nourishment to the friendly vine. Even so it will be with Altha's heart and life; but we must wait."

I was touched with the beauty of the simile, and

vexed with myself for harboring one ungenerous thought towards him. He went on :—

“My daughter has well spoken ; unto her is given a golden chalice filled with flowers immortal ; therefore, let her remain in some quiet retreat, to watch each unfolding germ of leaf and bud, and full expanding flower—heaven’s bright gifts !—then, one by one, fling them forth upon the winning wings of hope and love to cheer some lone despairing heart within this ‘wide, wide world, which has been to her a parent and a friend.’ These flowers would shine less bright cast upon the altar of fashion, where beauty dazzles, and flattery, with siren whisper, lingers, and the tempting whirl of pleasure draws one on, on, until even the wreath which binds the brow of genius is forgotten, and the flowers have paled and withered beneath the glare and glitter and care of pomp and show ; the languid spirit filled to satiety, and *ennui* longs in vain for peace and quiet happiness.

As we neared the chapel gate, Father Anselmo left me standing beneath the sweet-scented magnolia, its white blossoms filling the air with fragrance. I drew my hat over my eyes, and travelled back over memory’s pathway. Well, here am I, having left a country full

of light and intelligence, far over the wide blue sea, and come out here, to mingle with the heathen the idolater, and the Jew, interspersed with here and there a christian of the cross, and for what? to learn that the wisdom of life is love. Surely there is some overruling hand in this, and we must acknowledge the power we cannot see.

I acknowledged the presence of the Deity, the blessing of life, and the wisdom of eternity, and there the spirit breathed forth its first yielding, supplicating, soul-full prayer

The chapel organ sounded a glorious anthem; the *Te Deum* swelled upon the morning breeze, making the green leaves thrill with the rush of harmony. I thought of Altha and her singular prophecy. Had she the power of the sybil, to read the future? No! O no! Yet what is that vaunted power but a deeper knowledge of the intricacies of the human heart? I was aroused by the rustle of a dress, and, looking up, saw Senorita Isabella passing to the house from the chapel. I drew her arm within my own, for her face always wore a gleam of sunshine sufficient to make me feel quite happy in her presence.

We separated beneath the portico, and I turned off to

visit the *menage*, to see if my pony, who had been having a long rest, was in good condition for the morrow.

I took a stroll around the grounds, visited some of the work-people, and, furthermore, busied myself with preparations for my journey until the gong sounded for dinner. I had thought I could not meet Mrs. Marvin again. However, I boldly entered the dining hall, experiencing a slight twinge of vexation, which vanished in a moment. All seemed cheerful as usual, except Mrs. Marvin, who, as I glanced toward her, appeared a shade more thoughtful, if possible, than was habitual with her.

I chatted with Isabella, telling her of my journey in perspective, and bidding her watch for me about the eighth hour in morning, from the east window of the chapel, for the little white flag she had playfully made to adorn my horse's head, telling me that it bore a charm to insure success in all my journeyings.

After the meats had been removed and the desert brought upon the table, Mrs. Marvin placed her finger upon an exquisite spiral shell lying upon the table, it was filled with a coil of silver wire that vibrated with the touch and produced sweet musical sounds; it was a Chinese toy, of great beauty and ingenuity, picked up

by our eccentric host during his travels in the East. As the sounds died away, Mataka entered and glided to a seat beside her mother, to share the fruit and flowers. The intelligent Juba stood behind her chair, her eyes and heart swallowed up in care for her little charge.

"Father Anselmo, I have become so attached to Juba, that myself, as well as Mataka, will feel unhappy to part with her."

"My dear Mrs. Marvin, why need you part with her?"

"Since this is her home, I fear you would question my right to ask her to leave it to attend on me."

"I am indeed happy if she considers it her home; yet, all my servants are free to go, when and where they choose, if they can do better."

"Apropos to your position, Father Anselmo. We may quote the language of our immortal friends: 'Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! Run hence! proclaim, cry it about the streets.'"

"Thank you, Eldridge, I do love the poet who wrote:

'In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see my country's honor fade;
Oh! let me see our land retain its soul,
Her pride in Freedom, and not Freedom's shade.'

“Mrs Marvin, our friend Eldridge tells me you, too, are wonderfully patriotic. Here is to your success, raising the wine to his lips, I do not drain the glass,” said he, setting it aside untasted, “I eschewed it as an evil from my youth; I suffered on account of it; O, how much! But, my dear lady, what were you talking of leaving?”

“Father Anselmo, I have been too long a lingerer upon your bounty. Our feelings do so twine around cherished spots and hallowed memories. It is time I was looking for some employment that will enable me to support myself and child. A part of the small fortune with which I left the States, is still remaining; thanks to our noble friend Ethan,” which compliment she accompanied with a smile of gratitude. “However, it would not last long to live in luxury, such as surrounds me here. I would not have Mataka grow up weak and indolent, willing to eat the bread of charity or subsist upon the bounty of strangers.”

“Pray what do you know? what can you do? just nothing.”

His tone was jesting and his eye was full of mirth.

“Father Anselmo, how do you know what I can do?”

"True, I do 'nt know," he replied, with the brevity of language with which he occasionally surprised his listeners.

Immediately assuming his usual grave expression of countenance, he continued :

"Supposing you are saved from actual want, think of the hardship, the labor, the vexation of living in this busy, bustling world, where, seemingly, all virtue consists in looking out for '*number one*,' before you resolve to try it."

"I have thought of it, Father ; I must do something. I do not fear to trust my frail bark upon the sea of time, and struggle with the waves of human energy, for a position, which will enable me to live.

"Impossible !"

"No Father ; not impossible. I might fear if I had never tried it ; I may have gained strength by the rude waves of adversity."

"I will think of this and talk with you this evening ; I see my men have returned from San Francisco ; I must see what they have brought."

CHAPTER XXV.

"The web of our life is a mingled yarn,
Good and ill together."

SHAKSPEARE.

THE same evening we assembled again in the family parlor, perchance for the last time. Was it chance that guided us to this spot? was it chance, forming the web and filling the woof of our destiny? We may not speculate upon such blind theory, lest it prove obsolete beside the prescient Power shown in the sequel.

Mrs. Marvin sat near the table, engaged in stringing shells for Mataka. She looked interesting, even in her widow-weeds. How my heart yearned towards her. I seemed bursting with indignation at the thought of leaving her under the influence of the monk. He might be, even as I had conjectured, the bandit chief. However, Mrs. Marvin never partook of my suspicions.

Isabella, seated upon a stool, was bending over her guitar, which rested beside her, from which she had played the air while delighting us with some of her

favorite Spanish songs. Don Juan Venicia, who rarely favored us with his presence, in the back-ground pouring over the evening journal for news of the *outer world*; myself seated upon an opposite side of the table from Mrs. Marvin, carelessly surveyed the group. Father Anselmo, about whose life and purposes there seemed so much mystery, leaned back in a crimson *fauteuil*, nonchalant and dignified. He had paid us an uncommon share of respect, by laying aside that ugly cowl, and donning in its stead a cap of black velvet embroidered with gold, and ornamented with a golden tassel; the coarse cassock and girdle had been exchanged for a robe of purple velvet with gold embroidery, and lined with crimson silk; a mantle of India muslin and wide lawn inside sleeves; a diamond star burned upon the left breast, which added to the picturesque effect of his costume. Its high color and unique style lent a look of vigor and freshness to his countenance, not quite in keeping with the long white locks and grey beard that floated over his dress.

“Well,” thought I, “the lawlessness of the country, no doubt, has some effect upon him, as well as others who pride themselves by living unshaven and unshorn.

But I like that old rusty cassock, with its happy memories. I have found the wearer's heart in the right place ; but, with this new dress of THE ORDER, I want the assurance that he is one of us."

He spoke to Mrs. Marvin, who laid aside her needle and shells, and paid attention.

"My daughter, I promised to talk with you this evening, concerning your future plans ; but first I will speak a few words of myself, which may be of some interest to you. My birthplace and boyhood's home was in your own dear New England, where the rude grey rocks and whispering pines strengthen and shelter her stalwart sons, who go forth, often rough and unpolished, yet strong in integrity. I was a proud-hearted, impetuous youth, my very fearlessness leading me into danger and temptation. I stained my soul by draining the wine-cup, and sleeping the torpor of h——l ; awaking to a knowledge of a crime that drove me from my home, — no matter what. The knowledge of it made me culpable, and I must fly, or stay to suffer remorse and disgrace.

"I choose to fly, to become a wanderer in foreign lands, 'neath burning suns, mid scorching sands, o'er

hoary crags and alpine snows, among rich, among poor, even to the lowest depths of the mean, contemptible, groveling of human kind, and to the highest summit of the beautiful, sublime, glorious, and godlike of creation.

“My mother ! O, my mother ! ’t is true that I loved her, yet I left her, without one farewell word, without even a mother’s blessing, — a priceless jewel to enrich a lone and impoverished heart. My sisters, too ; I see them now standing in the doorway, as I turned to take a last fond look at their loved forms and the dear old homestead.

How I have wailed and mourned for the youngest, that I must leave her, with no one to shield or protect her. O, worse than the bitterness of death is the memory of our follies.

“I saw her, hair waving in the wind, and thought of the times I had carried her in (as I then thought) my strong arms, and kissed, with boyish sport, the golden curls that strayed over my jacket.

“But I must not linger over these bright day-dreams of my youth I must on. There was no time to weep o’er what I was leaving or going to lose. I must reach

the *cove*, where I hoped to find the plotters and enactors of the wrong for which I should suffer. Their boat was launched and ready to sail. I sprung into the water, and, leaping up, caught a loose rope and clambered over the sides, scarcely knowing how, and manfully assisted in working our rude fishing craft far out upon the blue water. We were out many days, at times covered with a dense fog, — we were nearly famished. We went ashore at a port a good distance from our own. Here I exchanged my dress for a sailor's suit, and shipped for England, subsequently visiting all the countries in the old world, encountering storms and shipwrecks and dangers innumerable, both by sea and land. I soon acquired a knowledge of many languages which often saved me, in the hour of peril, from evil and from death.

“At last I turned my steps toward this partially explored country. When the war opened between Mexico and the United States, I would not fight against my countrymen, nor against a people whose soil nourished me, or whose homes had given me a night's shelter.

“Accordingly I followed in the trail of the army, doing my best to relieve the suffering, the wounded and

the dying. I have seen ranks of my countrymen turn pale, with agony, as they passed a fallen comrade by the wayside, praying them for a cup of cold water. But, no ; the ranks must not be broken, the march must not be stayed, their laws are imperative. They must on, — shutting their eyes and ears to the calls of a brother, and their hearts to the voice of sympathy,

“What wonder then if men learn to glory in the strife. During the eve succeeding the battle of —, which had been remarkably severe, I visited the field of blood, hoping to serve my countrymen, if any living were found among the heaps of slain.

“I found a wounded officer, who had fallen, and was lost sight of, and forgotten in the succeeding rush and carnage ; I placed my canteen to his parched lips, and sought to staunch the purple life-tide slowly oozing from his arm and side.

“I heard a foot-step near. I looked up ; an old man, a monk, habited in a grey woollen cassock and cowl, was standing near us. Said he, ‘my son, may God bless you, in your work of charity and mercy. Let me assist you to raise the sufferer, and make him more comfortable.’ We did so, unfastening the gilded trappings, the blood-stained emblems of his worth and dreams of

earthly glory. The earth was his pillow, covered with a blanket and another spread over him, which we had found lying near. How fervently he thanked us for our attention. I watched beside him, the monk going now here, now there, among his own people. Our's was a sad, weary task, and the night waned ere our vigils were ended. The general ceased breathing; I bent lower over him; the conflict was ended; death claimed the soldier and the man, while he slept. We left him there to share, on the morrow, a common burial, from the hands of the victors. May the angels guard his dust, while folding their wings over the blood-stained field, watching o'er the unhonored graves of the vanquished. Our task was done. The distant watch-fires paled in the morning light. The battle field was hushed, the soldier and his slain charger all asleep, yet cold, stark and stiff, marked by the icy hand of death. I learned to hate war and every principle of oppression, even with the effects of honourable strife.

"My son," said the monk, as we neared the city, "come to my cell, if you need my aid, or when you will. Call me Father Joseph."

"I thanked him, and often, when the army was resting or waiting for reinforcements, I sought Father

Joseph's cell. It was rude, chill and gloomy. The floor was of dark grey stone, the roof of unhewn timber, dark and time-stained, rude wooden benches and a stone pitcher filled with water, composed the furnishings of the cell. He awoke in me a thirst for knowledge ; gladly I availed myself of his offer to become my teacher and my guide. I thought it must be easy for him to live a virtuous life, one so good ; surely he must be happy. I remarked the same to him one evening while we were conversing together, commenting upon the simplicity of his style of living.

“ My son,” said he, “ we live, we labor for the church for coming generations. We have one comfort,” he added, rising and walking to the opposite side of the narrow cell. He touched a secret spring, the wall opened and rolled wide apart, disclosing a library, the shelves filled with a long array of dusky volumes. Tome, and manuscript of parchment piled one by one, a vast, speaking, living monument of slumbering ages, — the echoing thought, tramp of millions gone down to the dead. Father Joseph seemed to enjoy my surprise for a few moments. The walls rolled back and fastened, leaving only the dingy timbers to view.

"Beyond," said the monk, "are many passages leading to the church ; you shall be acquainted with all in good time. I became a novice, and learned the sacred duties of the holy order.

"I found no trouble while Father Joseph lived, for he commanded great respect. He had been awarded priestly orders, honor, and power ; yet, he chose the plainest garb of the monastery, and the simple title of Father Joseph.

"One day, upon visiting his cell, after having performed a commission for him, I found him ill and lying upon his hard pallet.

"My son," said he, "my brief race is almost o'er, I near the goal, which is the grave. All I have belongs to the church ; the labor of a life-time. I sometimes fear I cannot get to Heaven : that I have not done enough. My merits are few compared with my deserts. Stay with me brother, to the last."

"What can I do for you ?"

"I know," said he, "you cannot save me, yet 'tis pleasant to have you with me in my dying moments."

"Do you suffer much pain ?" I asked.

"Oh ! I should not mind the pain, if I could but

know that I shall be happy. Oh! must I fall into the hands of the Author of our life, a living and a just God."

"Think," said I, "of all your labors, of your self-sacrificing life, your devotion to the church."

"But all my good works go for nothing. Oh! I have not done half enough. Upon the wings of thought came rushing my sainted father's death-bed scene, and in full force I remembered his dying words, so calm and peaceful, 'though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I fear no evil; my Saviour is with me.'"

"I repeated them; Father Joseph started up and gazed wildly around."

"Who spoke?" he exclaimed, "Brother, did you hear? Those are not the words of our church; yet, I feel at this moment to wish them true; how inexpressibly comforting and peaceful at this moment. How beautiful a Saviour to lean upon."

"His brothers of the church, appointed to the office, came in to anoint him with the holy oil, and other ceremonies required by the church for the dying. And those who loved him will contribute their *mite* to purchase masses for the repose of his soul. The same ob-

trusive thought, which often aroused me, reminded me of St. Paul's injunction: 'Let every one work out his own salvation.'

"Father Joseph's death weakened my affection for the Catholic church. I began to feel our own good works are not sufficient to purchase Heaven, though we are devoted to her interest and the strict observance of all her precepts and doctrines. If the memory of our charities, our penance, the mortifications of our spirit, the maceration of our limbs; our numerous prayers, though unmeaning, as they were, if repeated in an unknown tongue, could not console us upon a dying bed, what were we to do? There was but one way, to accept the free-will offering, the sacrifice of the Saviour's blood, to cleanse from sin; our good works, our moral lives are but a duty we owe to our Heavenly Father.

"JESUS is the good shepherd: he careth for the sheep. He who tries to enter the fold, except through the door of the sheep-fold, is a thief and a robber."

"My mind was made up. Yes; we have reason and revelation to guide us, — the soul of origin divine. Shall we not obey the teachings of our heavenly father, and adore the glorious majesty, the infinite wisdom of the Great Spirit?"

“I learn,” remarked 'Squire Eldridge, “the heart must be willing and the feet ready, in the service of the Catholic church.”

“Even so,” said the monk ; “yet it is not for me to disclose her secrets. If she retain one sentiment pure and beautiful, that one I shall love. My sufferings, my doubts and fears respecting her infallibility and requirements, may go with me to the grave.

“The poet says

‘ Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.’

Our duties teach us to sustain each other. Watch and pray. What is the soul without religion, without some knowledge of itself ? Obey the injunction — Go up to the temple to pray, whether that temple be the leafy grove, the marble dome, the mountain crag, or the fire-side altar, the Great Spirit hears.”

Father Anselmo was silent, leaning his head upon his hand, while we sat almost breathless with the interest and excitement with which we had listened to him. After a short pause, he added, “I LOVE MY COUNTRY. I mourn the injustice of Deacon Breck which has driven me an alien from her borders and the enjoyment of my

native home. I love my country! May she roll on in her glorious career of freedom, and learning, and her institutions progress until superstition, darkness and iniquity are remembered only in the pages of history. In that day Jew and Gentile shall be gathered in, and dwell in UNITY, FAITH and LOVE."

Father Anselmo's closing words had somewhat calmed the intense excitement from which Mrs. Marvin had been suffering. Like a marble statue, she had remained with fingers clasped and lips compressed. I thought to speak to her, to arouse her fixed attention; she only advanced a step nearer the monk, enquiring in thrilling tones, "Who are you?"

Calmly confronting her, he threw off his robe of purple velvet, appearing in a citizen's dress of fine black cloth, laying aside his cap and wig, disclosed a fine head covered with brown hair slightly sprinkled with silver, and a frank, noble countenance, though traced with care and weather-beaten. "Altha! Altha!" he exclaimed, advancing forward. She raised her arms to save herself from falling, murmuring in a suppressed voice, "EDWIN, MY BROTHER! can this be true?"

One wild sob. and she fainted, as he folded her to his

bosom, fondly caressing the wavy hair and white forehead, as though soothing a weary child to sleep.

“No wonder, you did not know me; I saw you leave the boat upon its arrival in San Francisco. You resembled my pet sister. I knew not what adverse fortune had called you so far from home. I watched you; you are here; I have enough; though I spend for others, I have a treasure for you.—The dove has found shelter; the wanderer bird found rest.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ Be just and fear not ;
Let all the ends thou aimest at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's. Then if thou fallest
Thou fallest a blessed martyr.”

“ AH ! Don Venicia, well met,” said 'Squire Eldridge.

“ Well met,” rejoined Venicia, bowing in return, “ I fancied I heard thee saying :

“ The age of virtuous politics is past,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence ;
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,
And we too wise to trust them,”

“ Not so Venicia, I eschew politics ; I have no faith in secret societies.”

“ Go with me,” said the Don, drawing Eldridge's arm within his own and moving forward down the walk.

“ The crescent moon has silvered the sleeping lake. The stars, one by one, have hung out their diamond lights ; the winds are hushed. Only the wierd spirit whispers in the falling leaves. We near the old grey

rock, and the long arms of the darkling pine tap, tap, tap, like the woodpecker's call upon the hollow beach tree. "Stand." Yet no form appeared embodying that grum voice. "Proceed." We advanced slowly. Ah, there are the hemlock boughs beside the old grey rock that shades the eddy spring. Eyes were shining mid the darkness ; forked tongues of fire leaped up among the sombre foliage ; birds of living coal, with wings of flame shot through the murky air and lodged in the branches ; strange voices whispered in our ears ; a solemn chant mingling, with the whispering zephyrs, touched our hearts, unnerved our arms. The glittering blade was sheathed ; welcome mysterious shades ; hast thou aught to teach us ? our souls are free to learn thy mysteries.

The darkness lifted. Light effulgent beamed from leaf and spray, lit as by a myriad glow-worm. We stood within an enclosure deep of stalwart forms, with whitened locks, erect, with folded arms. The signal for attention sounded

" Woe, woe to all who grind
Their brothers of a common Father down,
To all who plunder from the immortal mind,
Its bright and glorious crown."

A chief, clad in a robe of ermine, radiant with jewels, welcomed me. Slowly he spoke: "My son, life is full of mystery; our race is short; Time lends us to do the will of heaven; the good spirit whispers, we must live and labor for one another; tyranny and oppression must cease, knowledge be diffused, and FREEBORN RIGHTS must govern FREEDOM'S SOIL!"

The voice of prayer ascended like incense, through the thick branches of the whispering pine and waving hemlock. "Amen," echoed a thousand voices.

"Wilt thou join us?"

I bowed: then from the crystal basin, he sprinkled me with cool water drops, and laved my hands in the cooling liquid, saying: "Place thy hand upon this living Revelation of the Great Spirit which has descended to us, through rapine, fire and blood, from generation to generation, and it STILL LIVES. The star that has arisen in the East still shines, leading us onward to glory and duty. Kneel, while we enroll thy name among the list of freemen; brother, we administer the oath of allegiance. Now thou art enlisted beneath thy country's banner, to shield the religion of Jesus, contained in this blessed volume, and labor for the sons of

freedom, and thy country's good and glory, that she may be called great among many nations! Arise, brother, and remember freedom's soil, whereon thou standest, is hallowed ground, therefore, go forth; labor *fervently, silently*; then *watch and wait*. May the Great Spirit keep thy soul stainless of evil."

Another, bearing the ensignia of rank, clad in richest robes of sable approached, bringing a welcome and a charge.

"Brother, far away upon our journey toward the setting sun we meet again. Until then, as now, hearts will bleed and suffer; many souls will have been immolated upon the shrine of right ere truth prevail; many will cry peace, peace, when there is no peace; many shall bite the dust, not by the rack, and the brain-maddening torture, and the headsman's guilt toy, but the truth shall conquer. Go! be watchful."

Another, clad in russet brown, having scrip and staff chanted—

"How blessed are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of gospel peace, the power of true religion upon the soul; its efficacy in shielding from sin, a talisman in the hour of temptation, a firm support in the time

of need,—sufficient arguments for wishing it translated into every language spoken on the habitable globe. Go ! be steadfast.”

Another, clad in the coarse garments of a laborer, pressed my hand, saying—

“Brother, ’tis here we have to do in this every-day work-day world of ours. Happy that one who has lived for some good, be it ever so lowly. Wish not for the gift of genius,—a pen of fire, a golden easel reflecting every shade, every passion of human life. Only wish to be wise and happy, and win many hearts to our good cause, by thine earnest love and truth.”

Still came another counsel, from one clad in purple and gold. Said he—

“Ask not for fame ; it cannot give thee lasting joy. Ambition is but a mockery ; a phosphorescent light to lead to the miry pit of remorse, and the ‘dismal swamp’ of hideous torments. Let thine be a purer, holier life, —to live in the hearts of men, and learn of these same wayward incumbrances all the mysteries of life. Rejoice not to be ‘among the crowd and not of them.’ What pleasure to soar so high, as not to joy with those who joy, and weep with those who weep? Be faithful.”

Still another, of youthful face and form, whispered — “Our faith is large — our hope is strong. There is a good time coming. Therefore, like as the angels come to our hearts, and come to bless, let us cheer and love one another. Still they come, and still I listened to the words of those who sought to lead. Still they chanted “Remember the order.” Said a sonorous voice, “How many of our contemporaries sit upon the pinnacle of Fame’s temple, with a sea of white excited faces upturned towards them? And there they sit dreary and cold, shivering with the scanty meed of praise. At last they come down to die. And where are they? only echo answers, where are they? Be thine the boon to live in true hearts, in quiet homes, near humble firesides, in peopled towns, in lonely hamlets, in noble halls and quiet forest glens, upon the busy foam, and beyond the rolling tide; yes, even where wealth and pleasure meet, also where the poor, the weary and the heartsick are gathered; be thou there with thy gentle lessons and cheering promise.”

“What I say unto one, I say unto all,” said the patriarch of the order, with tremulous tones, rising up from the mound of earth upon which he had been seated. “Brothers, we must labor; we are called to labor;

therefore, come to the work willingly, counting labor no such great misfortune, but rather a blessing; neither count it misfortune to be poor. The soul filled with the holy principles of life, honor, faith, love and charity, is rich, far above price. Misfortunes and temptations may come, and weigh us down for a season, yet keep the heart pure and unstained from evil. Have faith! The angel Faith, with bright moving wings, can cheer, lifting the dark clouds higher and higher, and afar off, at last, disclosing the heavenly world which lies beyond our own; where the noble and tried spirit will find rest and peace, and the full fruition of more than earthly riches and glory. Therefore, labor, and faint not! labor, and weary not with well-doing, for great is your reward.

‘Labor, omnia, vincent!’

“Though slowly at first appears the good for which you labor, and softly, silently, steal along the breathing influence, fear not! it shall not die. It shall on onward! broader, and higher, and holier. When your share of the great work is finished, you shall lie down to rest; the spirit going home to God, hearing the welcome, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over

many, and with one voice all responded solemnly, 'Amen.'"

"Brother," said the ermine chief, again approaching, and laying his hand upon my brow; "thou knowest what has been spoken; what sayest thou?"

I answered, "Oh, wise and powerful chief, I *know nothing*."

Then was heard, in thunder-tones, "Friends, brothers, countrymen, disperse!"

The stealthy tread was hushed; only the gloomy pine whispered through the lengthened shadows, as Don Juan drew my arm within his own, and we turned our steps homewards.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“ Weep not that the world changes ; did it keep
A stable, changeless course, 't were cause to weep.”

THE next morning, after coffee had been served, and all preparations for my journey were finished, we assembled in the little chapel, and united in prayer, for the blessing of the GREAT SPIRIT to attend each one of us during all our journey of life and of future labors, also for our country, and her blessed institutions, — for her rulers, and all conditions of people. Then, with lighter hearts and cheerful countenances, these valued friends mounted, and accompanied me some distance upon my way. Halting at the base of a frightful acclivity, Senorita Isabella reined up her horse close beside me, and, gracefully and affectionately, spoke the farewell. Mrs. Marvin followed her example, adding, “ Brother we meet again.” Don Juan, placing his hand upon my horse’s mane, addressed me in the mystic language of his order, into which, the night previous, he

had initiated me. Father Anselmo, approaching me last, pronounced a fervent "God bless you." The escort respectfully touched their hats, filling my mind with an impression of deep regret that I must leave them.

Upon reaching San Francisco, I found my business in better trim than I had anticipated. I looked with surprise and astonishment over the city. Making my comments to Judge S——, while standing at his office window, concerning the endless variety of changes and improvements which had been going on since I left.

"Ah, my boy," he exclaimed, "have you, Rip Van Winkle-like, been napping for the last six weeks, that you have forgotten that *this is a fast country, and a FAST PEOPLE?*"

Halvor and I, had quite enough, *going out*, of that fast *clipper* sailing around the Horn, until days lengthened into weeks. It gives one a most perfect appreciation of his own inferiority, one moment riding mountain high upon a foaming wave, the next, almost to the regions below in the trough of the sea; then, as suddenly again changing to a calm smiling surface. But woe to him who trusts its serenity, lest he become food for the

fishes; in another moment a more sudden and greater change, the lightening flashes until the heavens seem wrapped in flame, ten thousand thunders roll and bellow, with snow and sleet enough to blind you; while the winds are screaming, screeching, raging mad in the fierce conflict, to tear you from the frozen rigging. If a man has the shadow of a soul he'll feel it then.

“How did you like crossing the Isthmus?”

“Oh, I fared remarkably well, notwithstanding the disagreeable propensity of my mule, to make sudden stops, sending me occasionally upon a soft bed of black mud; one sees a few specimens of humanity, not at all agreeable to weak nerves and notions of refinement; in common phrase, we have to get used to them.”

“Yes; one travelling that way learns to endure a thousand things he would never dream of at home.”

“Precisely; hark! there is the ‘Old South;’ I love its echoing clang, reverberating along the deserted streets, it gives one such a gloomy feeling, a grand loneliness. With the whole city so still and motionless like a great tomb, whose ghastly inhabitants have wrapped their mantles around them and lain down to enjoy pleasant dreams.”

"Twelve o'clock! Good bye Halvor. Come to my office early to-morrow morning."

Well, thought Halvor, as he drew himself up and glanced around the well-filled table, covered with a goodly array of edibles, mine host of the bountiful had furnished, these Yankees do improve a little, yes, a very little, in the fashion of swallowing their coffee boiling hot, followed by chicken and toast, without dissecting the one or masticating the other. He strolled into the reading-room, examined the morning papers, then passed out to remark the weather. A dull day is it, and not a speck of blue sky discernable, by looking straight up between the buildings of the narrow street.

"Going to get some rain, stranger," said a man with a fresh countenance, puffing away at a cigar.

"It looks somewhat like it, sir," responded our hero.

"Eh, very like," chimed in a raw-boned chap, leaning against one of the columns.

Staring first at the new-comer, then at the pedestrians, particularly the ladies, Mr. Hazel turned aside without deigning any remark, not from pride, O no; his conversation would be lost. Jewels of thought and mind

thrown away can never be recovered to the impoverished owner. True, there is some one redeeming coin of virtue buried in every heart, yet it often requires a skillful miner and patient laborer, to discover and bring it to use.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UP, up those shadowy, gloomy staircases, perched almost among the clouds. What! searching for the eyrie of some ravenous bird, in whose capacious beak you may chance to get stowed away, if you are not wise. When you get there it is not so bad a place after all. It looks quite light and comfortable. The carpet has been swept, the sofa, tables and chairs nicely dusted by the office-boy, and a nice coal fire is burning in the grate. As you enter the curly-pated African stares at you with those great dreamy eyes, then drops them upon his book, as something like a smile floats around your mouth, at the idea of one of his race commencing thus young to improve the hours, so soon after the chores are done, in studying law.

The desk, the proper repository of the secrets, being kept locked, we can't examine that; but we may, if curiosity dictates, peer into these antique boxes of treasure, stowed away in niches and convenient corners.

Look at the golden piles, consisting of a few old books not fit for the book-case, a few worn manuscripts, some bundles of greasy parchments tied with red tape, an old silk handkerchief, and a pair of cast-off slippers, side by side with a few choice shells, and minerals, not half so formidable an array as we expected. O, here upon the table is a box of cigars, and "a dozen choice," sent in by a certain well-to-do client; — bad, very bad; but our lecture is forgotten with the ready welcome and the lively chat of the light-hearted owner of these valuables.

"Ethan, you have not told me how you found your lovely wife."

"Why, Halvor, you know one just returned from El Dorado is quite a lion, or rather, *I was*, when I came, for they were not so common then as now. I attracted as much attention as the Royal Bengal Tiger, and I found it quite easy to make acquaintance with the reputation of the golden wand in possession. One evening, while attending a social party at Colonel Harvey's, I met Emilie T——, daughter of Judge T——; (you used to know him.) I was more than pleased with her at first sight, and we made rapid strides towards getting

acquainted. My mind was speedily made up, and it does not take long to get the hymenial knot tied, when one's mind is made up. I find her, as the song says,

‘All my fancy painted.’

You must call round often; she took quite a fancy to you the other day.”

“And so, 'Squire, I am to understand your *liason* with Mrs. Marvin was speedily forgotten?”

“Forgotten, Halvor; I reckon it will be about the last thing *I forget*. I was interested to make her prophecy prove true.”

“Precisely the case with every one who listens to the words of a necromancer; they try to bring his predictions out right.”

“But, Halvor, was it not singular, her meeting her brother after an absence of twenty years?”

“God's plans are not ours, and the Great Spirit works by means.”

“I know it. Altha used to say the same; Emilie reminds me of it now. I am vexed if I ever forget it for a moment. No great wonder either, when our heads are full of all sorts, we have to ‘*take the papers.*’”

CHAPTER XXIX.

"HALVOR, I have just received a letter from an old chum in California."

"Eh! 'Squire! what, does he say?"

"TO AN OLD CHUM AND DEAR FRIEND.

"JULY 10TH, MURPHY'S DIGGINS,
CALAVERAS COUNTY, CAL.

"ETHAN,—From the mines I write you a few lines. Politics and law being somewhat below par in the city during this hot weather, I have taken a run to the mountains, for the first time. For the fun of it, I furnished myself with miners' tools, consisting of shovel, pick and tin pan. I have been here some two weeks prospecting, that is, going around washing out, a few pans of dirt here and there, to find a good place to dig. I have dug in all about two BITS. (twenty-five cents' worth,) just enough to say 'I dug gold.' I love to see the miners work; some of them have faith enough, from appearances to dig and dig for six months and more, without finding anything,—dig down two or three hundred feet, under ground and all around; then they strike a big lead, where it yields them two or three hundred, perhaps a thousand dollars a day, and they make their pile. Then others dig away for years and don't make grub. It's a very uncertain business, and I should not like it at all, unless I could strike a big lead at first. I am in Calaveras county, three hundred miles north of San Francisco. The weather is rather warm; the thermometer runs from one hundred to one hundred and fifteen, all the time, in the shade; but we do not suffer with the heat, the atmosphere is so pure among the mountains,—quite a healthy country. I have visited the

great mammoth cave in this county; explored it to the distance of half a mile from the entrance: found chambers, halls, and a lake of water, as is usually found in caves. But did you see the big trees in this county, when you were here? If not, I suppose you have heard of them. Next to Niagara, they are the greatest curiosity in North America, if not in the world; so it is said. The big tree, or mammoth tree, — although there are a grove of big ones — measures three hundred and two feet in length, thirty-one feet in diameter, and ninety-three feet in circumference, and is said by naturalists to be three thousand years old. This big tree was cut down or rather bored through, so they got it down after a fashion. Over the stump they have built a house, which forms part of a hotel kept for visitors. When there is company enough, they get up cotillion parties and dance upon the stump. It is large enough to form a quadrille set. Upon the upper part of the tree has been built two ten-pin alleys, having plenty of room all around them, and a house over them.

It seems to me that Nature tried what she could do when she 'got up' this grove of trees. There are eighty-five trees of the large kind in the grove; the smallest is ten feet in diameter and two hundred and ninety-two feet high, and the largest is four hundred and fifty feet high, and one hundred and ten feet in circumference. This one must be very old; it is called the 'father of the flock.' The inside of one of the large trees that was down, has been burnt out, and thirty persons mounted on horses can ride abreast through it.

"I have been out to-day a little way, hunting grisly bears, which abound in this region, but did not have the pleasure of getting one. I shall return to the city in a few days, when I will write you something more interesting; in the meantime, I hope to hear from you, and all the news of home. The States will always be home to us, and, as ever, we consecrate many of our best thoughts to our own dear New England."

CHAPTER XXX.

"SISTER Altha," said the quondam priest, leaning back in his arm chair, regarding her as she sat caressing Mataka: "Tell me, was your married life happy?"

"Why, brother, do you ask? How could I be quite happy, and my husband away so much?"

"Not that; I mean, did your husband love you and labor to promote your happiness?"

Altha smilingly replied: "What put that idea in your head, brother?"

"But, you do n't answer my question."

She resumed, playfully, "You know I do n't come to confession. If my husband had faults let them rest; or, if he loved less than I did, is that to be considered a fault? It is not well for woman to give her whole soul into the keeping of mortal, lest the too fond love turn again and pierce her own heart."

"Come, suppose you get out some new work teaching how to love wisely."

“Joke and smile if you will, brother; I shall do no such thing; *la belle passion* is not to be taught, it being a spark of the invisible relation we hold to the Great Spirit, or Deity; and is the wonder-working power producing the pure, true, and lovely, in human nature.”

“Then, how can a soul full of this God-given principle, prove a source of trouble or suffering to its possessor?”

“Simply, because we have to do with mortals like ourselves, and set our affections upon material things.”

“Altha, would you have all the world turn stoics and embrace the principles of selfishness?”

“No; I would only have them embrace the religion of virtue.”

“What do you understand that creed to be?”

“The sublime truths taught by the early philosophers: first, that the principles of virtue are the laws of God, from which none depart without suffering for it in some way or other, and the doing good to others, or an emanation of the Divine Spirit which comes without teaching and should be cherished. Happiness is the state of pleasureableness which must be the result of well doing. Therefore, a first love of God, or virtue, if

you will, coming between ourselves and the object of our affections, will help to guard us against temptation, and cheer us under disappointment."

"You advocate marriage, of course?"

"Where practicable, I do, as it is a ceremony and a state honored and blessed by God, in which the greatest amount of happiness is attainable."

"But, supposing two persons united by the marriage ceremony, find themselves entirely unlike each other, and they *can't* be happy, what then?"

"Brother, have done with your catechising. Can't, can't! I wonder who hunted out that pusillanimous word?"

"Why have you taken such a dislike to it, Altha?"

"Perhaps, because it reminds me of something ridiculous," said she, smiling. "But I suppose I must tell you, if it does not do me any credit. When almost a child, that is, soon after you left home, I found, as I imagined, a friend, one who was always talking of his disinterested regard for us, often telling me to come to him if I needed advise or assistance, in short, he would be *my brother*. I had something of an idea of constituting him my guardian angel; one day I asked of

him a trifling favor for a friend, which was a good word from him, and any gentlemen or common acquaintance would not have hesitated long enough for me to have finished the request; but he said coldly, 'I *can't* do it.' I sprang up, confronting him with scorn, accompanied by a few bitter words, Heaven save me from dealing out to any other. Here was a man, portly and lord-like, who could crush my petit form between his thumb and fore-finger, saying: 'I can't.' It rung in my ears for days."

"A pretty guardian angel, forsooth. How did he take it?"

"Why, he looked perfectly stupefied with astonishment, as I turned and walked away. And I never troubled my head concerning his friendship afterward. However, it did some good, as I did not know I had any temper before, and I immediately commenced the study of self."

Said her brother, "I never thought I should like a woman with too much spirit, but a little is very desirable sometimes."

But to return to our story:—

"Do you believe your husband loved you?"

“Yes; I think he did.”

“Now I would like to know what reason you had for thinking so?”

O, pray do n't expect me to answer all the freaks and ungovernable whims, contained even in one specimen of the *genus homo*.”

“Altha, I remember our friend Ethan used to doubt the possibility of one person loving another to any extent, unless they were loved in return, more particularly where there was little of attention, kindness, and mutual sympathy to foster it.”

“Wait until he has been in love.”

“If I mistake not, he has taken a few lessons already.”

“What, must I endeavor to prove to you, there is as wide a difference between love and fancy as between Heaven and *terra firma*.”

“Precisely, provided your arguments are sent like sky-rockets without end or aim.”

“I choose to remain about as wise as the old lady I once heard trying to teach a young girl wisdom; after having exhausted all her stock of argument and invectives, she exclaimed, with a look of irritation, ‘Well,

I never ; when one loves, they love without a shadow of reason for doing so, and they will love all the same if misfortune and death oppose it. I can't comprehend it,' said she, her feelings softening a little ; 'yet I have seen some of the disappointed ones become stars, too pure and bright for earth, while others go down with them 'whose steps lead down to death.'"

"But, Altha dear, I know Marvin loved you."

"How do you know it?" said she, rising up with a look of interest.

"There it is, we affirm a thing ourselves and in the next breath eagerly question another's knowledge. He told me so, asking me to watch over and protect you and Mataka ; indeed he prayed me to do so ; oh ! how earnestly ; yet, he never knew there was a tie of kindred between us. He told me no one could have had half so much power and influence over him as yourself, and he could have made you so happy, but for his indomitable pride constantly rebelling against his better nature. You had so little art, and no skill in dissembling, accordingly, he discovered all, too soon for your happiness, and before you were aware of it ; your regard for him, and when you were all his own, how he liked to tease you, in order to probe the depth of your affection. If

you had been indifferent, or raved occasionally, it might have done some good ; but you invariably met his delinquencies with that earnest, pleading, suffering look ; it would have unmanned him, unless he sheltered himself behind the wall of hateful pride. He did not dare to be loving or agreeable, for the same reason, for your caresses and happiness would take the temper all out of him, and he was afraid of getting into leading-strings. He would not be persuaded, up to the moment of his leaving home, that you would be left behind, although, notwithstanding the influence of your friends, he needed to use commands, threats, almost violence, compelling you to remain ; yet, not until he was fairly upon the water, every moment losing sight of land, would he be persuaded that you would not come, — and then, he was unreasonable enough to think that you did not love him.”

“ Poor, poor Walter,” said Altha, with a look of anguish, “ he never knew what he threw away. But pray do not make him out so bad.”

“ I cannot believe it,” continued her brother. “ He had no courage or inclination to earn anything at first ; if he did, he’d spend it ; at last, he thought he’d make

the effort, that he might come home. He bought a piece of land to get worked, but his health failed too soon to accomplish much. When you come out to him so nobly, he would not suffer you to know how much he valued your love and presence ; he said it vexed him to see how easily you gave up your own pleasures and comfort for him. I promised everything he wished me to do for you. The land is being worked as he suggested ; it pays well already, and the prospect is, that you and Mataka will have a splendid fortune in your own right. He suffered, only his God knew how much, with that fearful pride, which prevented him from folding you to his bosom, and sharing with you every joy and sorrow."

Mataka had slipped away soon after the conversation commenced, in search of Juba, and Mrs. Marvin sat weeping violently.

"I knew it would open the wound afresh, and make your heart bleed, but he wished you to know it, that you might be happier."

"Oh ! this is too much. It almost makes us call upon the grave to give back its dead. Why could he

not have let me know it, then I might have done so much more for him."

"Do not grieve or criminate yourself; you did more than your duty."

"I am not quite sure of that; 't is difficult to decide where duty ends in such cases."

CHAPTER XXXI.

“THE news! the news! who’ll buy the news?” saluted our ears from one of the million news-boys jostling each other in the great emporium of fashion and famine, while standing upon the steps of the Irving House, watching the busy tide of strife — the ebb and flow of human beings along the crowded mart in Broadway and Fulton streets.

“Arrival of the Great Western from California, — distinguished passengers. Who’ll buy,” continued the youngster, edging his way first upon one side then the other, the better to protect his bundle of merchandize, “The Journal of Commerce; will you take, Mister?” thrusting it toward Ethan, eyeing him at the same time from beneath his dusty head covering, then turning to Halvor who selected a couple of different ones, much to the youngster’s satisfaction, and handing him the bits, our two friends turned and entered the reading saloon. Halvor turned to the list of passengers; his forehead

paled, then flushed, his eyes lighted up, and a faint smile might be seen hovering over those full lips. He handed the paper to 'Squire Eldridge who perused the list with no small interest. "Possible," said he, discovering the names which had startled his friend Hazel, "quite an unlooked for arrival, and I'll do myself the honor to welcome them."

"Madam Marvin, family and servants; quite unostentatious, truly," said Mr. Hazel rising, "the steamer has been telegraphed in, it is just time for her to be at the wharf."

Proudly, gracefully, the ocean-chariot bore down, ploughing the dark water, and dashing the white-flecked foam far upon every side. How many hearts bounded and wildly throbbed to welcome her precious freight! How many longing hearts were joyously returning to the simple pleasures and endearments of home! and again returning to bless the hallowed ground, a free-man's boast, and bend, with moistened lids, above the green turf or the marble urn, where repose the loved ones, who, weary with watching, have been soothed by death's angel to sleep.

O, those tedious delays, of custom officials, baggage and porters, ere we are allowed to depart and enjoy the

smiles of welcome, a little friendly chat, and a few brief reminiscences of by-gones. Assembled in the drawing-room, Mrs. Marvin appeared to us beautiful and lovely as ever, while the brilliant Senorita Isabella Venicia, with her small talk and the coquetting language of her ceaseless fan prevented any great display of sentiment, as we rehearsed, for the benefit of each other, snatches from the drama of the PAST.

I learned from Mrs. Marvin that her brother had forwarded letters to an old friend of their fathers, whom he had not lost sight of, owing to the kindness of some liberal minded gentleman he had encountered in his travels. She might hear from this friend in a few hours, until when, she would make no arrangements for the present, of domesticating themselves at the travellers home. While we were speaking, a gentlemanly clerk entered, and with a graceful inclination of his head presented Mrs. Marvin a silver salver, upon which lay a card; she took it up, glanced at it, and smiled her thanks to the waiter, who readily interpreted therefrom his answer. She turned to look at Mataka standing in front of the window, with child-like interest and prattle, watching the novel sights and

listening to the confused jargon of the street below, Juba stood near half concealed by the heavy window drapery, she being privileged, taking charge of the little girl. Her woolly hair, pressed down close as possible with slender shell combs, was ornamented with braids of dark brown ribbon, giving her head quite a fixed-up appearance. A splendid set of masticators shone between a pair of round ruby lips shadowed by a sort of smiling grin; soft black eyes were swimming with an affectionate intelligence, with the rich red blood welling up, and tinging cheek and lip through the dark stain; she looked quite interesting. She was dressed in a light blue cashmere, trimmed with bright buttons, and a little green silk apron. Not less attractive, to every gazer, appeared the principal part of our group who had to endure a sea of eyes upon all occasions. Mataka was most simply dressed in a frock of French blue and white plaid silk, fastened at the back and upon the shoulders with unique cameos, armlets, bracelets, and girdle fastened with the same, set in sprays of gold; these were the gift of father Anselmo, and worn for his sake. This dress and ornaments were suited to the style of the

delicate child, whose fair shoulders were loaded with a shower of golden curls.

Senorita Isabella, was reclining among the velvet cushions of the rosewood *tete-a-tete*, inhaling the perfume of a choice bouquet of flowers; she was arrayed in a delicate rose color silk, the full flouncees covered with the richest black lace, the corsage and sleeves covered with the same costly net; her hair was arranged, very much as when we first made her acquaintance, having the same braids, waves and curls intermingled with gems, and an occasional diamond or spray of pearls, but without that envious muslin veil; a satin shoe, with black sole and high heels, something after the fashion of our illustrious grand-dames, fitted to admiration her proud little foot. To that coquettish fan of pearl-feathers was pendant, a chain fastening a tiny bouquet-holder, formed of delicate pearls mingled with flowers of gold and silver.

“Senorita,” said Mr. Hazel, bowing toward her flowers, “you will have to depend upon the green-house for your favorites.”

“Senor, I fear so. Thanks to the unknown friend who has sent me these; I shall prize them more than ever now.”

“With us they are so plenty, I may say, I have walk-

ed upon flowers, breathed flowers, nearly all my life. I will hope your future path of life may still be strewn with flowers destitute of thorns."

A thrilling glance of affection shone from out those dark soul-full eyes, so delicately shaded by the long fringed lids. Mr. Hazel glanced toward Eldridge, who was donor of the flowers in question, adding

"Our friend here, despite his brusque style, (his own opinion, however,) will do agreeable things. They flow unwittingly from his generous heart, and we may lend heart and mind, for the time, to the magic of their happy influence."

A happy tear glistened upon the long lashes as Isabella playfully raised the flowers to her lips in acknowledgement of the favor. Mrs. Marvin observed 'Squire Eldridge's hand tremble, as it lay upon the table beside her, for he was possessed of a rare under-current of sentiment and feeling.

She inquired, "Do you remember the magnolia that shaded the east chapel window, Ethan? It was in full bloom when we left; a perfect, magnificent snow-wreath."

"Mamma," chimed in Mataka. "How I wish we could have it here."

“We cannot have all we wish, my child, yet no doubt we will have many pleasures here we did not have at home. We must learn, my dear, to prize what we have in every situation. I do not wish you to forget old friends, not even the flowers,” and she brushed back the long curls and kissed the white forehead of her darling.

At this moment my attention was attracted towards Mrs. Marvin's costume, which was very rare for me, considering she never appeared to give the subject a thought. Dressing, for the gratification of her friends, I think she might have studied to be well dressed, and forgotten it the moment her toilet was completed. She was wearing a dress of shaded purple and black *moire antique*, the skirts ornamented with a broad trimming of jet and chenille flowers, interspersed with shining leaves of velvet and satin, 'kerchief, stomacher, and sleeves of rich embroidery. The muslin at the throat was fastened with a spray of amethysts, also bracelets of jets, amethysts and pearls; her hair was ornamented with a wreath of the same, interspersed with a few delicate hair-flowers of the same shade as her own hair, and one golden wheat, and a tiny shamrock enlivened the whole, by peeping from those wavy puffs. I was taking in, at a single glance, what has taken me

so long to describe, making the reader almost forget the card Mrs. Marvin had received, when the clerk announced a fine-looking man evidently belonging to the Society of Friends. His brown coat of the finest cloth, shining broad-brimmed beaver, and powerful frame, surprised us not more than his clear hazel eye, and open countenance, full of goodness and manly pride, charmed us at first sight. As he approached, Mrs. Marvin arose and extended her hand, but he took, instead of one, both of her's, within his own, regarding her with a look full of kindness and love.

She drooped her head, to hide her emotion, for she was remarkably susceptible to any little show of kindness from others. He passed one arm around her shoulders, lifting her head and looking down into those speaking eyes, imprinted a father's kiss upon her forehead, treating her as he would have done a favorite child, exclaiming "Altha! welcome, welcome home!" then leading her forward, Mrs. Marvin presented him to each in turn, as her father's friend.

A pleasant word, a friendly grip and smile he had for each; he seemed so kindly disposed towards us, that we were immediately acquainted; and enjoying ourselves.

Enquiries followed concerning the voyage, and Altha's brother whom he had known when a boy ; then he spoke of his own people.

Said friend William, as he was called :

"I thought I was going to meet a stranger, but thee reminds me so much of my friend General Walton, that I seem to have known thee all thy life,"

Said Altha, "You remember when you visited father, how I used to come into the parlor, wishing you would look up from your paper and talk to me, and if you chanced to look over the top of it, how quietly I would glide away, not daring to speak a word."

Altha had spoken this with more than her usual vivacity, and as she ceased, her Quaker friend again bent upon her those great brown eyes, answering, "I thank thee."

Ethan played with the tassel of the curtain, while Halvor bit his lip, half vexed that both had resided under the same roof with her, without discovering what friend William had done, without seeing, the very touchstone and foundation of her character, which was a gentle lovingness, only satisfied with a powerful intellect to guide, and a stronger arm than her own to rest upon.

They had sought to win her by setting her upon a pedestal to worship, from which position it would be necessary for her to come down with possession. For them it might have been better, if they, full of noble thoughts and deeds, had loved her with full faith, and expected the same love and confidence in return; the simplest lesson, and sure of meeting success.

“How long does thee think of stopping in the city?”

“Just so long as you think advisable; all important business concerning myself and child, my brother advised me to refer to you, for counsel, while I remained in the States. As for myself, I have very few acquaintances or friends in the city; probably all have forgotten me during my long absence, or at best, I am remembered only as a dream of the morning, dispelled with the first ray of daylight, or the first adverse cloud of absence.”

“In like manner do you forget your acquaintances,” said Halvor, with some show of interest.

“Me forget,” and she lifted her eyes with such a look of astonishment, encountering his own. Wishing to change the effect upon others she gaily remarked, “Oh dear, every one I meet looks so sentimental, I am afraid

of losing my own individuality and following the fashion."

"Bees gather around sweets," said our grave Quaker friend.

"Oh, fie, fie upon thee," and a laugh of music was heard that echoed in every heart, making the pulses thrill.

What wonder it was the first time any one present had heard Altha laugh, a free, happy laugh. She had grown sad as memory peopled the world of the past; and reflective, as hope with her starry wings folded, pointed only to a heavenly inheritance. She lived at that moment in the present. Halvor gazed at her almost with a look of triumph, as he watched her momentary confusion. Instead of resenting his glance she passed quickly to his side.

"Halvor, do not mock me, my heart is full, full of this undeserved happiness, and I am grateful, very grateful, my friends, for all your past and present kindness. I am indeed oppressed with a sense of obligation for which you have only a share of my poor love. The contrast of to-day with that of my leaving home years ago, when all the cherished plans of life had died out in the

soul, leaving it a wreck of hopes and fears, partially reanimated upon a foreign shore only to be buried with the loved one in the dust, completely overpowers me. Therefore, my friends, you will, you must, forgive all my eccentricities."

Fortunately for me, other ties bound me, or I should have thrown myself at her feet, and hazarded another refusal," said Ethan, when recounting the entertainment to his wife.

However, friend William was on hand, to prevent a scene, which he did, by drawing Altha's arm within his own, and leading the way to supper.

The next day, I saw Madam Marvin and family, escorted by our friend William, *en route* for the stone cottage by the sea-girt shore, where the artist's lion reposed beneath the marble portico, and the eagle and the dove in arabesque, looked down from the columned hall; escutcheons old and honored, of the illustrious dead, frescoed the lofty ceiling. And Altha loves her sombre cottage home, near which the waves leap up and dance, and mocking, kiss the rocky strand, making merry and mournful music; or, when obedient to the storm—God's wrath,—they roll mountain-high, swelling, roaring,

lashing the white breakers in their mad rage. Often alone sits our gentle friend, listening to the teachings from out great Nature's heart, filling a universe, forming a world; or, on some pleasant shiny day, our friend William, with his loving wife hanging upon his arm, clad in her rustling silver silk, her little grey bonnet shading those love-lit eyes, may be seen treading the walk so nicely paved with shells, leading up to the door of the cottage, where they meet with a warm welcome from our eccentric Altha, who sits beside them or at their feet, and learns, with a pure heart, lessons of worldly wisdom, the practical lessons of life.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“Lull’d in the countless chambers of the brain,
Our thoughts are link’d by many a hidden chain;
Awake but one, and lo, what myriads rise!
Each stamps its image as the other flies!”

“HALVOR, this is our last night, ‘positively the last night.’ I have been from home a whole week. and must return to-morrow, or my Emilie will be sending for me, or crying me down, as having left her bed and board, without just cause. I must return to-morrow. Now it is your turn to raise the veil, and let us behold the wonders of your adventures.”

“Ethan, my friend, it is a long time since I have rehearsed my adventures. Indeed I have become quite miserly in hoarding my own affairs, believing they can possess no trait of interest; but to you, who watched over me through that long tedious voyage, and through whose care I was brought back to life, I will lay aside all fastidious notions and reserve.”

“Pray don’t mention anything in the way of gratitude, for the debt is still upon my side.”

“Well, Ethan, we will not quarrel about it; we were saved; we are happy, and we have yet something to live for. Usually the want of observation makes us thoughtless of the present and heedless of the future, and the melancholy fact is, that we so often increase our amount of information, without practically increasing our amount of motive.

“But to return to myself: When I left you at San Francisco I took the boat, and followed some distance up the San Puebla, having no settled purpose in my mind, being only on the look-out for something new and strange. I soon joined a party bound upon an exploring expedition north. We were out many weeks, encountering hair-breadth escapes and privations, too numerous to particularize at this time. However, at the expiration of six weeks, our whole party, myself excepted, returned to San Joachim, completely exhausted. I resolved to remain for a time and try ‘*Border Life*,’ and joined a party *en route* for Oregon, to settle there. But owing to sickness, fatigue, and scarcity of suitable provisions, and almost impassable roads, it being the

rainy season, we were obliged to encamp for better weather, and to recruit.

“I fell in with the party, some two hundred miles from their place of destination. They were twelve in number, the greater part having gone on with most of the wagons. One of their greatest fears was from the Indians, dreading some hostile tribe might come upon them. We had fuel and some food to procure, and to keep a vigilant watch through fear of a lurking foe.

“There is so much excitement connected with border life, that I entered into it with great zeal. There was a young girl, who had seen eighteen summers, among the company, with her father, mother, and brother. They called her Stella Iverness; she was delicate and beautiful as a poet’s dream. At times I have watched her, persuading myself there could be no ties of kindred between herself and family. How often a rare flower is transplanted to an humble wayside home, as a link, to lead its companions to a better and heavenly one. So it seemed with Stella.

“I stood leaning against our rude tent, at the back of it, while the different members of our party were engaged preparing the evening meal, myself listening to

the whispering of the leaves of the surrounding forest trees and the indistinct murmuring of a distant waterfall. Upon looking up, I saw the gleam of a light dress disappear among the trees, at the left. After a short time I threw my rifle over my arm and followed in the same direction, knowing it to be unsafe for one to be out alone far from the tent. I reached the large tree beside which the dress had disappeared. Beyond was a huge grey rock surrounded by trees and stunted oaks.

“I peered around for some time gently putting aside the bushes, and at last discovered an open space encircled by a belt of these tangled shrubs, the space being covered with evergreens, myrtle, and pale flowers that grew in the shade; two or three stones were lying there partially covered with moss. And there too was Stella, kneeling in prayer. This was her oratory,—Nature’s own temple, ‘not made with hands.’ I was struck with surprise; a feeling of curiosity tempted me to listen, which I should not have done in any other case; but it was long since I had heard or thought of such a thing. She prayed for her friends, her country, then so earnestly for myself—for the stranger that had come among them. Her lips scarcely breathed a sound at

first, but they grew eloquent, with her supplications, and I heard distinctly every word. When she had ceased I stepped aside and walked away, she soon come up with me, and was going to spring past, I caught her by the arm, and said, ‘Stella I want to talk with you one moment.’ She tried to free herself. Half vexed, that she had no more confidence in me, or a dislike to hear my request, I remarked again, ‘Stella, I have heard your prayer; I want to know why you prayed for me?’ She looked up frankly, and answered:

“‘Because I want all my friends to join me in the home to which I am going.’

“‘What do you mean, Stella? I don’t comprehend you.’

“‘O, I am going home, far above the blue sky, and I want all my dear friends to come. You can’t go now.’

“‘Why, Stella, what can you mean; you are not going away,— you are not going to die.’ The tears sprang to her eyes as she murmured, —

“‘My friends must go to their new home without me; they must leave me here,’ and a few tear drops fell, in spite of her efforts to restrain them.

“‘Taking one little hand in my own, I said, ‘Stella, why do you talk so? you are nervous.’

“Laugh at me if you will, chide it as folly ; yet I feel it, — I know it — every day, — every hour, creeping, chill and cold around my heart. I did not want to be left here ; but I am willing, if God wills it. I know my spirit will not rest, and I want to know all my friends will meet me in Heaven.’

“Stella, your parents must know about this. Your imagination, your over-wrought sensibilities are deranging your system, undermining your health.”

“‘No, no ! let them remain in ignorance of it, they can do nothing for me, more than they do ; they have no means of doing anything more. Mr. Hazel,’ she inquired more cheerfully, ‘did you ever learn to pray ?’

“Yes ; when a child my mother taught me. She is an angel now, and all, all have forgotten me.”

“‘No, no, do not say that ; God has not forgotten you.’ And she sat down by me upon the fallen trunk of a tree and talked with me so beautifully of ‘that bright world which lies beyond our own.’

“The night shadows had gathered silently around us, and the gentle dew was felt, setting in its work of charity, to replenish the thirsty earth. When we returned to the tent, Stella’s mother seemed pleased with my

attention, and speedily acted upon my suggestion, to do away the effect of the damp.

“Daily, hourly, Stella drooped and faded, and wasted to a shadow. Even the roughest woodsman of our party was transformed into a gentle nurse when admitted to her side.

“One day, toward spring, I watched her, while her mother was preparing something for her comfort. Stella seemed sinking, sinking. I bent over her several times to see if she breathed. Suddenly she started up and looked around. Mrs. Iverness was near her in a moment. Stella twining her arms around her neck, murmured,

“‘Good bye, mother; do not grieve for me,’ and kissing her, sank back upon her pillow. Father, brother, and the few friends, who composed all of our party, immediately clustered around, and shared in the farewell. Once more arousing herself, she held out her hand to me, and I bent over her to hear her softly whisper,

‘Remember — to die is but gain.’

“The sun of her young life had gone out and left darkness brooding around the hearth-stone.

“I grieved to leave her sleeping in that grand old

forest, all alone. It was some comfort to linger near her ; but there was no alternative. We hollowed out the trunk of a tree, and in it made her bed, and buried her deep, and heaped on the stones and earth, to prevent the prairie dog from digging for her remains. I lingered near the grave : the full moon was shining gloriously, tracing gloomy and fantastic shadows upon the ground ; I bowed my head and thoughts in prayer, to Stella, wishing her, from her mysterious home beyond the skies, to intercede for me, to watch over me, and make me worthy to meet her at last.

“No answer of hope came back to my sorrowing heart ; no feeling of peace filled my soul ; but a sad thought, that she had forgotten me and earth, came upon me ; utter loneliness stole over me as as I tried to comprehend the vast gulf between us, and I threw myself in despair beside her grave. Instantly a feeling of reproof shot through my mind. I hesitated ; I looked up ; the same solemn stillness reigned as before. I stood up ; a zephyr passed over my face, and this thought seemed spoken in the inmost recesses of my soul — ‘JESUS IS YOUR FRIEND ; HE IS AN ALL-SUFFICIENT SAVIOUR !’ I was conscious that Stella was above me, and sorrowfully

understood what I had felt — that my prayer to her was mockery to God. I laughed at myself, and believed that I must be laboring under some mental hallucination.

“But there it was, as calmly and sensibly felt as though articulated by the human voice, and written upon everything around. It was a sympathy of spirit, soul answering soul, nothing to fear, but all to love. She had cast off her cerements of clay ; she was an incomprehensible ray of celestial light, and had been called home for some wise purpose, to work out the will of the Father — the Great Spirit. Then I knelt upon Stella’s grave, and poured forth my soul in prayer as only a strong mind can do, when it feels there is a power superior to its own futile reason. I walked away calmed with a light and holy calm ; and now, in my more peaceful hours, I can feel that spirit-influence cheering and guiding me.

“I left the tent and the wayside grave, and struck out upon a new track. Reaching the Pacific shore, I took passage in the first convenient packet, for the old world, with the Bible for a companion — Stella’s Bible, her dying gift. I passed through lands of pagan dark-

ness and gross superstition, unto the distant shores of Palestine, even to the summit of the Mount of Olives, and the spot where stood the Temple, once the glory and pride of Jerusalem, now a heap of broken ruins. How could I fail to trace in all the wonder-working power of God? How could I doubt the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Saviour? while lingering near those ballowed places, the mind expands with benign influence, and fills with divine charity.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“And they who before were strangers,
Meeting in exile, became straightway as friends.”

LONGFELLOW.

Once more I stood upon the shore of our golden country *en route* for home. I longed to meet my sister and give her a brother's love. I longed to meet my father, as every shadow of his former harshness had been effaced, feeling perhaps I had done better to have borne it more patiently, and counted myself as the only one in error. I longed to traverse the grounds and halls of old Harvard University, and mark how many of former friends and associates would recognize me.

One morning I started from the city of San Francisco, for a day's ride in the adjacent country, to make myself better acquainted with its scenery and facilities, and ruralize a little among the fertile hills, bold, jagged and picturesque.

After two hours' ride, I suddenly encountered a party of two ladies, mounted upon splendid Spanish horses,

and six swarthy, fantastically dressed men as attendants. I stared at the party with no little interest and curiosity. One was a dark Spanish lady, a splendid beauty; the other I judged of Saxon origin, delicate, with a fair skin, and very interesting. I bowed as I passed; the delicate lady returned the salute without seeming to notice my rude stare, and I felt I must have known her previous to that meeting. To some remark of her companion, she replied:—

“One of my countrymen, *senorita*!”

Instantly, I turned my horse, without thinking of etiquette at all, and rode to the side of the lady who had returned my bow, despite the savage glances and ready gathering of their retainers. I offered her my card, which she accepted, glanced at it and bowed, repeating,

“From Boston; ’t is a long time since I have had the pleasure of meeting one from that dear city.”

“Was it your home, lady,” I asked, bowing in turn.

“Yes, it was for a long time.”

“Let your being a countrywoman be sufficient excuse for my presumption, and allow me to accompany you by your side.

“It is the surest passport to our homes,” said she,

“yet in our border life, we learn to welcome the stranger.”

After two hours' pleasant ride, the ladies reined in their steeds, signifying their intention of returning. I felt reluctant to part with them so soon, and begged permission to accompany them.

“Most happy,” they answered, “but our ranche is some distance from here; it will be night before you can return, and you are alone.”

Assuring them that I would brave all danger, we galloped homeward. I soon found I had not counted upon the distance.

Arriving at the lodge, the lady dispatched a servant for her brother. She cordially invited me to alight and partake of some refreshment, which invitation, I was happy to accept. Upon rising to go, I looked in vain for my horse, which I had left in care of the groom.

Said mine host, in answer to my inquiry,

“I sent your horse around to the menage. It is too late for you to return to San Francisco to-night.”

But I was determined not to listen, the thought entering my brain, that it was like forcing myself upon them.

“Make no excuses, my son,” said he, “I shall not

consent to have you go unless it is very inconvenient for you to remain, and then I will send an escort with you.

“However, at length I was quite pleased with the idea of remaining, although it had been the farthest thing from my thoughts.

I found Mr. Walton, or Father Anselmo, quite entertaining for he had been a traveller and a scholar, principally educated among Catholics; but his feelings and views had changed somewhat, and he was living contented upon his own estate, surrounded by a numerous clan, all free and happy, yet owning him not only their superior, but a friend as well as master. He seemed to live but for their interests and do good wherever there was occasion. I told him frankly of my meeting with the ladies; he smiled. He seemed to comprehend every tone, every feeling of the heart. Perhaps his early misfortunes, education and subsequent seclusion all conduced to teach him that great important study of man. I lived over with him my travels and present situation, for which I received an invitation to stop with them. I might say, with truth, that we were well met, and my heart warms toward him even at this hour.

I returned to the city with my horse, followed by a native leading another, as Father Aselmo would not hear of my leaving him except with the promise of immediate return.

Hours and days glided imperceptibly by, numbering weeks e'er I had had time to think. Every day making it more difficult for me to leave my new found friends. Madam Marvin's society had become necessary to my happiness.

"O, ho!" said 'Squire Eldridge, raising his feet a round higher, and sitting back in a comfortable corner of the sofa, "I wonder that I never thought of that before, and you so suited to each other."

"Always the way," returned Halvor, slightly smiling, "when we know a thing we wonder why we never thought of it before. I purposed telling her of my regard. One evening after candles had been brought in, the intruding insects brushed away, and the screens fastened over the windows by the careful domestic, I commenced telling her of my future plans, and found her capable of appreciating and encouraging me concerning them.

[Here her brother entered, interrupting us, when a

long conversation followed, concerning free institutions, and the best method for advancing civilization and christianity.]

“As I sit here,” said he, “in this isolated spot, and watch the affairs of home, (for it will always be regarded by me as home,) I rejoice to see the works of her sons, her noble, freeborn sons, and I would never have them careless, or thoughtless of her interests and principles. I can sympathise with every true-hearted brother; my blood bounds with enthusiasm, when I think what our fathers suffered, toiled and bled, to gain freedom for posterity. I do not speak of any immediate danger, yet I would not have them suppose themselves wholly secure in their dreams of peace and self-enlightenment, honors and pleasure, while evils are, or may be creeping, slowly, yet surely, into their *hearts* and *homes*. 'Tis not for me alone to cry out a warning, lest they brand me with the mark of shame, and prove that I once turned away and followed after other idols. O bitterly, bitterly I have lamented the evil doing of those who caused me to become as an alien and a stranger in my own country.

“I am aware of my own folly and guilt. But I was

young, without guide or home, and kindness conquered my half-matured principles. Much more," said he rising, "might be said upon this subject; but a word to the wise is sufficient."

* * * * *

The morning sun shone brightly in at the little window, and the cooling breeze fanned my fevered brow, as I awoke, with a confusion of images in my brain, of the previous evening's conversation, and the train of thought it had suggested.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us
Footsteps on the sands of time !
Footprints that, perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, may take heart again.”
LONGFELLOW.

AT twilight I walked with Altha around the grounds; we stopped beneath the flowering acacia, within the enclosure of the little church; we remained for a time silent and thoughtful. “Altha,” I enquired, taking her hand within my own, “have you not already discovered my ill-concealed affection for you? will you go with me? will you be my better self, always cheering me in the path of right, and nerving me in the path of duty?”

She turned her face from me and remained silent several seconds, to me an age. When she looked up scarcely a trace of emotion was upon her pale cheek. I

was almost vexed, she appeared so calm while I was trembling with excitement.

“Tell me, tell me Altha, do you love me?”

Her eyes were full of confidence, and laying her hand upon my arm, she answered “Halvor, you need not be told that I love you, and desire to insure your happiness. Yet, I may not accept the blessed privilege of sharing your home and making you happy.”

“Altha, this is wretched; what mean you? do you doubt my love for you?”

“No, not for a moment;—I believe our souls are united.”

I held her hand in mine. I wondered how she could be so calm.

“Halvor, we should be wrapped up in ourselves—we should forget our duties; let us end this scene. You have important affairs to attend to; some of your beloved countrymen have appointed you to a position of honor; they expect much from you; you need none of my assistance in the way of duty; you only wish my sympathy and you will have it. My child requires all my attention; for her sake I give it to her; for her father’s sake I would not forget this duty; yet it is hard

to refuse this great happiness — this greatest of earthly blessings.”

“Altha, Altha; oh, why do you mock me — why do you deal out agonies every moment, worse than death?”

But Altha had fainted; she had been tried in the furnace of affliction; she had experienced sorrow’s sternest discipline. Her heart answered — “I go with thee: thy God shall be my God; thy people shall be my people.” Though not on earth, in heaven she will fulfill that promise.

I must say I was anything but sensible or reasonable that night. I met Altha the next morning in the breakfast-room, looking rather haggard, I suppose, as I had not touched my pillow. She was standing at the window; I went up to her and dropped upon an ottoman near her. As she turned toward me, I covered my face with my hands.

Said she, laying her hand upon my arm, “Halvor, Halvor, where is your fortitude? you see I am calm.”

It had the desired effect, and I went through the ceremony of breakfast very well, though my soul did wince a little occasionally. I gave her my arm, and we strolled out, the better to familiarize ourselves with the pros-

pect of a separation. We lingered near the acacia flowering branches, upon the spot where we had made the revelation of our love. Every scene, every animate or inanimate thing seemed full of life and happiness. Her hand rested in mine. Father Anselmo came from the little church and passed; before we were aware of his presence, he had saluted us, and laying his hand upon our own, repeated —

“What God hath joined together let no man put asunder. I know,” he added, after a short pause, “that you have both loved each other from the first moment of your meeting. My sister’s peculiar notions. that she ought to devote herself to her child ——— ”

“Brother, I think I must abide by my decision; yet if Halvor grows weary or dispirited at his labors, then I will be to him all he or you can wish.”

I strained her to my bosom, and giving her one long wild kiss, in which we might have exchanged our souls, I gave her to Father Anselmo, and prepared for instant departure. I would not trust myself with a longer farewell. Softly I passed her door; it opened; —there stood Altha. I sprung forward, and she wound her arms around my neck. Her features were rigid as marble, a cold dew stood upon her

forehead. I was frightened; how could I have thought her calm and calculating! "Speak, Altha! speak but one word; say that you will be calm; say that you will wait for me, and I will endure this separation for your sake, and come back."

She opened her eyes, and by a strong effort of the will, which often stood her in times of need. She answered, "*I will wait.*"

She walked with me a few steps, when the last kiss, the last "God bless you" was spoken, and giving her into the hands of her waiting-woman, I sprang down the steps, for the call had twice sounded, that all was ready.

"Halvor, can this be true?"

"Only too true, Ethan."

"And you met Mrs. Marvin upon the deck of the Great Western again, for the first time since that parting?"

"Even so; it is as you say, Ethan."

"I must say you are a perfect bundle of eccentricities, both of you. Possible that you remained under this roof forty-eight hours and never spoke of your sentiments for each other?"

"Precisely; no word passed between us except under your own eyes. I intend to wait patiently, if possible."

"O now, I comprehend Altha's improvisatore last evening, just before leaving the drawing-room. She still dooms you to labor for the benefit of your people."

Go ! forget not I am with you,
Sharing in heart thy cross and chain ;
Spirits know their kindred ;
For thee I sing this wild refrain.

Go ! be wary and be steadfast,
Bide the pit and flee the snare ;
COUNTRY, FRIEND, and BROTHER,
All thy love and trust must share.

Go ! thy watch-word it is nothing !
Go ! thy banner let it wave
O'er the true of every nation, —
Fear no tyrant, own no slave !

Thy lamp to guide a Saviour's love,
And cheer thee on life's toilsome way ;
A cloud by day, by night a fire,
Pointing to heaven's celestial day.

Said 'Squire Eldridge, "It is vain and futile to speculate upon the probable future of two such eccentric beings, who, by a simple element of the will, can yield interest and happiness for the benefit of kindred or country. I suppose it is another one of the lessons of the great spirit *akin to Heaven*."

CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. HAZEL touched the bell ; his ring was answered by *Pat*, with his broad shining face, full of enthusiasm and obstinate humor. Said Halvor, handing him a bright quarter, "Call a carriage in half an hour, and see my baggage properly put upon it."

"Shure, sir, an' I'll be afther doin' that same, mis-ther," making a grand flourish, in which his whole person largely participated.

"Patrick," called Mr. Hazel as the Hibernian started for the door, "how long have you been in this country?"

"Ah ! to be sure ; just three years and a day next Easter, yer honor. Bless the day that I set fut in it."

"You like it then, better than your own country?"

"Och, by the powers, there's no place like our own swate Ireland, where the pure water and the green fields makes us comely and hearty."

"Then, why did n't you stay there, or return again?"

“Ah, to be shure, an’ its me that loves the honest penny I get, and the spot o’ land, and the bit o’ larnin’ for the childer. Hurrah ! hurrah !” said he, “for the blue flag of Ameriky ! May the Houly Mother bless the land of me adoption !” and having relieved himself of this piece of enthusiasm, he made his exit.

“Ethan, what need, of a farther lesson ? Do we require a stronger incentive to carry on the good work in thousands of true hearts ? Not to make Pat more of a machine ; not to suppress the energies of the man, by protecting the institutions our fathers founded, that the light of our happy country may *never* shine upon the day when despotism, with giant stride, shall stalk through our borders. Happy be that dawning when the plague-spot of a nation’s weakness, or secret sins, have passed and are forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

“ Press bravely onward ! not in vain
Your generous trust in human kind ;
The good which bloodshed could not gain,
Your peaceful zeal shall find.”

WHITTIER.

A DARK-EYED man, with raven locks slightly sprinkled with silver, and twisted in careless masses above his lofty temples, reins up his splendid bay in front of the sea-side cottage, and throwing the bridle over the stone post, enters with hasty step that simple, beautiful parlor, and kneels to the lady of the house. She strokes back his damp locks and smiles, breathing words of faith and hope, pointing to a bright star arising in the future, faintly shrouded by ignorance and wrong. Then the chevalier, rising, forgets the passion murmur that swayed his soul for a moment, and answers with holy words and eloquent aspirations, until cheered and strengthened he goes forth again to *labor* and to *wait*.

No wonder man sinks in the strife and turmoil of life. I would, that like Halvor, all might have as

true a heavenly and earthly friend. He has forgotten his weariness and weakness as he goes forth, while she, the idol of his soul, our gentle Altha, seeks her closet, and prays for him, and that no idolatrous love enter her heart, to change her purpose of a quiet peaceful life.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE stars look down upon the dusky Park, telling to the murmuring fountain their hearts' worship in radiant glances; the crystal drops leap up with glad joy at the oft-told tale, then quickly steal away, to cherish the dark earth, or, linked together mirror the sleeping lake. As ever, forms are hurrying along the gravelled walks, some filled with love and happiness and the dear image of home and friends. Others are bowed down with care and sorrow. They have no heart to look up, no soul to smile. We glance at such sympathizingly, and pass on. Would they could hear our thoughts as we look back after them. Take courage, friends; we have lived a day of sorrow! the dark clouds are past! we are happy! Be not disheartened; you may smile again; only keep the heart pure, and remember the Great Spirit forgets only those who forget him.

See yonder sculptured marble front, and the burnished silver plate upon the hall-door; there Halvor's

father dwells. Let us enter. A family group. Annette is home, and is playing a game of chess with our favorite lawyer, Ethan. Mrs. Eldridge, with Annette's fond husband, and Halvor are bending over some new engravings in another part of the room. The piano is hushed, because father is reading the papers; he lowers it and looking over the top of his gold-bowed specks, exclaims:

"Ah! these *isms*, know-nothingism, for instance, I wish they would have done with it, as a *perfect humbug*. Do n't you think so?" addressing his words particularly to Ethan.

"I do n't know, sir," is the response.

"Father," said Annette, glancing archly at the *lawyer*. "How do you know but he is one of them?"

"Pshaw! not him, I'll be bound; he has too much sense."

Ethan having finished the game of chess, walked away to the window, where he is joined by Halvor. Interpret their silent language, it says: "Be not discouraged, labor and wait; yes, wait to see if in vain we have given our time, our talents, our wealth, our friends, and long years of exile, for our country's good." And Halvor's dark eye, and the white circle around the mouth,

betrayed a cloud flitting over the soul as he thought of Stella's grave, the lessons in the wilderness, and Altha, whom he styles the star of the sea-side cottage.

* * * * *

It seems but a dream of yesterday that we stood in that dear old room, in the stone cottage ; the rain pattered upon the window panes, the box and the hemlock swayed in the rushing wind from off the foaming water. We were not alone. Friend William and his loving wife, Ethan and his New England bride, Altha and Halvor, and the splendid Isabella ; even Mataka, clad in the gala dress of childhood, was there. But still we wait, and chat, and watch the storm. A carriage drives furiously to the door. The reeking coachman, in oil-cloth coat and hat, lets down the steps, two men spring out, their slouched hats pressed hard upon their foreheads, one wrapped in a heavy grey shawl, the other, in a Spanish cloak. They enter the hall and throw hats cloak and shawl at the wondering attendant. Who are they ? The parlor door opens, Altha is clasped in the arms of a brother ; his stone-grey beard contrasting with her wavy brown hair as he bends over her. Beside the half-fainting Isabella kneels a haughty Spaniard. The loud thunder's roar has ceased ; the red lightning has

leaped his sombre cloud-car and rolled away ; the sun sets gloriously in the west. Again the door opens, a clergyman, with book, and long black robe, enters ; Altha chokes down the rising sob, Halvor walks to her side ; friend William earnestly watches the pale cheek. Is she going to lose a companion or gain a friend ?

Behind Mataka's golden curls Father Anselmo's eye and lip are shaded ; Senorita Isabella is standing side by side with the stranger, with joined hands ; Ethan and his bride are upon each side. The man of God invokes a blessing. Listen :—

“I Don Henri Vespucci, do take thee Isabella Venicia to be my wedded wife, to love and cherish for ever.”

Father Anselmo rises ; he speaks his home language With years and wisdom his heart has not grown cold — his manliness has not died out. “God bless you, my children,” he murmurs above the bride and bridegroom. He takes Altha's hand, and, joining it with Halvor's, presses them between his own, and looks up to heaven with a mute appeal. He turns to Mataka ; fondly again and again he kisses the wondering child, and strains her to his bosom. He turns away, and in that

darkened chamber, in prayer, he pours out his yearning soul to the Great Spirit.

* * * * *

The last parting embrace is given ; the last farewell word has been spoken ; Father Anselmo and Don Vespucci with his bride, are seated upon the deck of the Ocean Bird, that

‘ Walks the waters like a thing of life,’

returning to their golden home. Don Juan Venicia is married to an Anglo-Spanish maiden, and they are happy.

Father Anselmo, with his numerous clan—a mixed people, lives to do good, with Isabella and her husband to preach likewise. “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, none of *them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him !” Donna Isabella and her husband share with Father Anselmo a home.

Deacon Breck defrauded many, and was long since ejected from his church, and died among the Mormons of the West,

Our two worthies—Ike and Mose,—Father Anselmo, greatly interested, traced them to New York. Alas, how wretched ! Ike was lying upon one of the

wharves, tattered, filthy and homeless, the fruit of his vagabond life. Mose long since filled an unhonored grave.

Our early friends, Mr. and Mrs. Vale, are still living, the favorites of wealth and fashion.

Generva, Altha's sister, surrounded by her children, is covered with cares and honors.

Counsellor Eldridge, in his office, is still watchful and steadfast, while our friend William is quietly doing good in the beautiful city of ———.

But our dear and noble Altha and Halvor are still doomed to LABOR AND WAIT.

THE END.

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